

MODERNISM AND THE POSTHUMANIST SUBJECT:

The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer

by

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B. Arch., Georgia Institute of Technology, 1976

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE, ART, AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
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Abstract

A history of modern architecture can follow two distinct paths. First is the path of the *object*: an analysis of the historical origins of the things and events themselves. Second is the path of the *subject*: an analysis of the more intangible and shifting historicity of the concepts and categories by which we attempt to understand objects and events. This study analyzes the reciprocity of subject/object relations in modern architecture. Subjectivity constitutes the categories of possible experience, objectivity is what is experienced; and architecture resides in the both domains.

The particular dialectic of subject and object treated here is that which emerges in the buildings, projects, and writings of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer, each of whom, in different ways, brings himself face-to-face with the threatening problems posed by modernity to bourgeois humanism and the sovereignty of its modes of artistic production and reception. My thesis is that a perceptual shift, which I call posthumanism, can be detected within the work of these figures. Posthumanism is the consciousness and conscious response, whether with applause, resignation, or regret, to the threatened norm of psychological autonomy and individualism. Each of these architects produced a body of work that delineates precise social agendas as well as aesthetic preferences and offers architectures that would be adequate to the posthumanist social orders envisioned.

The study draws on established and emergent analyses in critical theory, in particular those of the Frankfurt School and of certain poststructuralist thinkers. It attempts to demonstrate that many of the experiments by these architects previously relegated by the critical-historical establishment to reductive versions of functionalism or *Sachlichkeit* can be more fruitfully explained within a framework of positions indicative of the changed status of the subject and the ways the subject is variously constituted by the different architectures.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson
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Introduction

The separation of subject and object is both real and illusory. True, because in the cognitive realm it serves to express the real separation, the dichotomy of the human condition, a coercive development. False, because the resulting separation must not be hypostasized, not magically transformed into an invariant. This contradiction in the separation of subject and object is imparted to epistemology. Though they cannot be thought away, as separated, the pseudos of the separation is manifested in their being mutually mediated — the object by the subject, and even more, in different ways, the subject by the object. The separation is no sooner established directly, without mediation, than it becomes ideology, which is indeed its normal form. The mind will then usurp the place of something absolutely independent — which it is not; its claim of independence heralds the claim of dominance. Once radically parted from the object, the subject reduces it to its own measure; the subject swallows the object, forgetting how much it is an object itself.

Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object" (1969), in The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), 498-99

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Modernism, whatever else we may mean by the term, has something to do with the emergence of new kinds of objects and structures in everyday social, technological, and economic life and, at the same time, the emergence of new conceptualizations of everyday experience, of the changed relationships between objects, their producers, and their audiences and consumers. A history of modern architecture, then, can follow two distinct paths. First is the path of the *object*: an analysis of the historical origins of the things and events themselves — the buildings, drawings, and writings, as well as the social, technological, and economic transformations with which they can be related. Second is the path of the *subject*: an analysis of the more intangible and shifting historicity of the concepts and categories by which we attempt to understand objects and events. It is the second path that I propose to follow in this thesis, recognizing that ultimately the paths would converge, that in historiography, too, "the separation of subject and object is both real and illusory." I shall analyze the transformations within modern architecture of certain subjective attitudes and perceptual categories which are *at once* formations by specific social and historical forces and *at the same time* productions of new forms of objective structures and operations. Architecture will be understood as a mediating practice between social phenomena and private experience. Subjectivity constitutes the categories of possible experience, objectivity is what is experienced; and architecture resides in both domains. Subjective categories are formed through the very object world they organize and explain. This is the inescapable dialectic of architectural production.

This study accordingly turns on the difficulties of the act of interpretation itself and presupposes that we can never really approach a building, a drawing, or a text

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immediately, as a thing-in-itself, but rather as something always already interpreted. To confront the buildings, drawings, and texts at issue here is also to confront the sedimented readings and reading habits through which they and other modern projects have been understood and situated. But more, the study recognizes that an architectural object is placed by interpretation only, but also *places itself* in the world, so to speak — in culture and history, in theories of culture and history, in theories of interpretation — and its manner of doing this constrains what can be done in critical exegesis. An architectural object is one whose interpretation has already commenced but is never complete. Historical contingency and circumstantiality, subjective categories of thought and object perception, as well as the artifact's persisting sensuous, material particularity must all be considered as incorporated into the structure of the object; they saturate the immanent properties of the work. All of which is to reject the view that meanings and subjectivities are already constituted and existent somewhere outside the work and that the critic's and historian's business is to locate them, and to recognize that modern architectural practice aims to bring into being new meanings and new subjectivities, seeking to figure not only what *is* but what *could be*.

The particular dialectic of subject and object that will be the topic of this study is that which emerges in the buildings, projects, and writings of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer, each of whom, in different ways, brings himself face-to-face with the threatening problems posed by modernity to bourgeois humanism, and to the sovereignty of its modes of artistic production and reception. The rationalization that was attendant to modernity is inseparable from a problematization of the subject defined as conscience and will, that is to say, of humanism. This threat has already been

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articulated by Sigfried Giedion who framed his own problematic in terms of subjective perceptual categories. But as we shall see, Giedion attempts to accommodate the threat to humanism to a protracted humanist model of creation and perception and continues to claim an independence of subject over the determinants of matter. So while this study begins with an analysis of Giedion's account as a paradigm of the received view of modernism and reinterprets some of its insights, it should also be seen as a critique of the received view's fundamental ideologies, recognizing with Adorno that the mind's "claim of independence heralds the claim of dominance."

In philosophy, modern humanism has usually been subjected to a twofold critique: first, a critique of humanism as bourgeois ideology — the doctrine that valorizes "man" as such and masks differences such as class and historicity — and second, a critique of instrumental or technical reason which is affiliated with bourgeois ideology and culture.¹ Thus humanism has often been associated with the rise of capitalism and the ongoing bourgeois revolution. In architecture, however, this conception of humanism overlaps another which extends from Renaissance theory and the concomitant epistemologies of the human body, perspective and harmony, and visual homologies, and has its corollaries even in present day architecture. It is an expanded model of humanism which includes both conceptions that will be employed here.

In humanist thought the role of the subject vis-a-vis the object has been that of an originating agent of meaning. The subject enters the dialectic with the world as its

¹It is, of course, within a Marxist tradition that this critique in its most familiar form has been made. But a deconstruction of metaphysics of subjectivity from a Freudian, Nietzschean, or even Heideggerian tradition finds common ground with Marxism on the themes of abstract "man" and idealist rationality.

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source, as the intending manipulator of the object and the conscious originator of meanings and actions. Modern humanist architecture — Charles Garnier's Opera, say, or Otto Wagner's Postal Savings Bank or Louis Sullivan's commercial buildings — encodes the values and norms of a bourgeoisie still emergent in a market economy, providing a system of representation that exactly suffices the sense of self, the aesthetic preferences, social habits, and forms of entertainment of that class. But within modernism, and within disparate disciplines, there developed another attitude that shifted away from a dominant humanism. This changed cultural attitude is evident, for example, in the writings of Samuel Beckett, the atonal and serial musical compositions of Arnold Schönberg, the non-narrative films of Hans Richter and Victor Eggeling, the productivist and constructivist work of the Russian avant-garde, the spatialized history of Rimbaud's poetry, and perhaps even in Kurt Gödel's "incompleteness" paper in mathematical logic. These are stylistic and technical manifestations. What is important is that atonality, the renunciation of narrative time, the disprivileging of the purely visual, and the thematization of incompleteness and uncertainty are aesthetic corollaries of the disenfranchisement of autonomous individualism. The subject is no longer viewed as an originating agent of meaning, but as a variable and dispersed entity whose very identity and place is constituted in social practice. Objects and processes are seen as having a material existence independent of, and at times threatening to, the unity of the individual self. In this context, man is what Michel Foucault has called a "discursive function" among complex and already formed systems of thought which he witnesses but does not constitute. Siegfried Kracauer, a contemporary of the architects to be considered here, put the situation of the subject in modernity this way:

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The world is split into the diversity of what exists and the diversity of the human subject confronting it. This human subject, who was previously incorporated into the dance of forms filled by the world, is now left solitarily confronting the chaos as the sole agent of the mind, confronting the immeasurable realm of reality. [The subject is] thrown into the cold infinity of empty space and empty time.²

My thesis is that an analogous perceptual shift, which I shall call posthumanism, can be detected within modern architecture — in particular the architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer.³ Posthumanism is the consciousness and conscious response, whether with applause or regret, to the threatened norm of psychological autonomy and individualism. I shall attempt to demonstrate that many of the experiments of these architects previously relegated by the critical-historical establishment to reductive versions of functionalism or *Sachlichkeit* can be more fruitfully explained within a framework of positions indicative of how subjects relate to objects in the present world and how they might relate to them in a possible future one as anticipated in the experiential categories delimited by architecture. We are concerned, then, with analyzing the status of the subject and the ways the subject is variously "constituted," "constructed," or "inscribed" by the different architectures.⁴

²Siegfried Kracauer, *Schriften* 1, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 13

³The work of Adolf Loos and Mies van der Rohe, though secondary for the present study, will also be treated in comparison with the work of the main figures.

⁴Of course, it must be recognized that actual individuals, by virtue of their complex and multiple historical and cultural affiliations, always exceed the subjectivities constructed by architecture. Indeed, another sort of study could perhaps argue that it is precisely in that excess that concrete critical resistance to dominant ideologies is located. My claim here will be, however, that precise potentials of

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The term "subject," meaning both particular individual consciousness and material-ideologically constituted consciousness in general, is inherently multiple and equivocal. Any reference to an individual self and its relation to ideological institutional and disciplinary apparatuses entails a concept of the subject that has overarching connotations which take it beyond the particular person. But any completely collective concept of the subject which suppresses individual differences fails to be adequate to its object in the real world where those differences have not been entirely eradicated.⁵ The term's polysemic indecisiveness is strengthened still further if we introduce the contradictory meanings of subject as active agent — the source of one's control of one's own destiny — and as passive object of domination — the instrument of an other to whose will one is subjected — and as willing subjects who "work by themselves."⁶ Similarly the term "object" comprises a constellation of meanings including the brute facticity of the world, the artifacts of culture, their

meaningful critical resistance and action are produced and made available, albeit only in a symbolic mode and at the level of cultural representation, in the architectural objects and their *subject-productive force*.

⁵"Subject'... may refer to the particular individual as well as to general attributes, to 'consciousness in general'.... The equivocation is not removable simply by terminological clarification, for the two meanings have reciprocal need of each other; one is scarcely to be grasped without the other. The element of individual humanity... cannot be thought apart from any concept of the subject; without any remembrance of it, 'subject' would lose all meaning. Conversely, as soon as we reflect upon the human individual as an individual at all, in the form of a general concept — as soon as we cease to mean only the present existence of some particular person — we have already turned it into a universal similar to that which came to be explicit in the idealist concept of the subject." Adorno, "Subject and Object," 497-98

⁶"[T]he individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself.'* *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* This is why they 'work all by themselves.'" Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), 182; emphasis in original.

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immanent formal organization, and the forces by which those artifacts are produced, forces that are, in turn, manipulated by subjects.

A dialectical understanding of the subject/object framework is thus demanded if our epistemology is to be adequate to our interpretive task. A simple positivism fails to recognize the active, constitutive agency of subjectivity in creating the world — or at least that part of the world we call history, culture, and society — and thus is complicitous with a passive, contemplative politics which accepts the world as an already finished reality. On the other hand, idealism develops and preserves the active, practical side of subjectivity, but does so only on the abstract level of an absolute, unchanging, transcendental Subject. And humanist epistemology incorporates both passive contemplation and transcendental ideals. A genuine materialist epistemology should call into question not only the passive subject of the positivists but also the overly active, transindividual, constituting Subject of the idealists; it should anticipate ways of mapping possible new structures and new subjectivities beyond the horizon of the humanist tradition. This thesis, then, further intends to be a step forward, albeit a modest one, in the development of such an epistemology within architectural critical discourse.

In the attempt to deal with some of the vicissitudes of architectural practice between the wars, the epistemological basis for this thesis is constructed from a range of disciplines and positions. Perhaps the most significant, sustained attempt to thematize the changed conceptualization of objects and the changed relations of subjects in a systematic aesthetic and critical theory is found in the body of work generated by Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Georg Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and Siegfried

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Kracauer, which is also related to the earlier writings of Georg Simmel. (Specific works will be cited in the respective sections of the thesis.) Theirs is a vivid diagnosis of the reification⁷ of the subject under industrial capitalism. By dialectically juxtaposing antithetical concepts and exposing the irreconcilability of subjective concepts with the objective reality they were supposed to describe, these authors direct their work to the double task of peircing through the mere appearances of modernity and demonstrating the inadequacy of received (humanist or idealist) concepts used to define it.

For example, Adorno affirms neither the concepts of reality nor the reality itself. Rather, for him each is affirmed only in its "nonidentity" to the other. Even so, what gives knowledge its consistency was not the universality of the human subject, but the uniform, commodity structure of the material object. The object, not the subject, is preeminent. For Adorno and Benjamin, the subject got out of the box of bourgeois humanism by giving itself over to the object, entering into it. This "immersion in particularity" (Adorno) does not lead to the subject's discovery of its individuality, but to a discovery of the social structure in a particular historical configuration.

⁷A note on terminology: *Alienation* derives from the division of labor, the splitting of life into separate activities in which the individual worker's experience of a unified and self-contained process is destroyed. *Commodification* is the organized process whereby the work of art, like all objects, is alienated from its primary and traditional status as an object of use-value and of aesthetic experience, and becomes an object of exchange-value, one whose character is determined first and foremost by its relation to the market. *Reification* (*Verdinglichung*) names the penetration of commodification into the very core of personal experience, a condition in which the relations between persons is reduced to that of an illusory, impersonal relationship between things (i.e., "thingified," *verdinglicht*). Unlike the concept of alienation — a process that pertains to activity, and in particular to the dissociation of workers from their labor, their products, their fellow workers, and ultimately from their entire experience — reification is a process that affects our cognitive relationship with the social totality. Reification thus becomes a conceptual category by which we can explain certain transformations of the art object.

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To some extent, this aspect of the works of Adorno and Benjamin can be understood as a critical elaboration of the prior work of Lukács in terms of the categories of subject and object. Lukács sees the split between subject and object as the thread uniting modernist aesthetic experimentation. For Lukács, however, the "destruction of the individual" should be resisted by art, since it is this same destruction that was at the heart of capitalist alienation. In contrast to techniques of montage, distancing, and negation, which came to be advocated by Benjamin and Bertold Brecht, for Lukács the ability of art to interrelate individuals and social development lies in the artist's capacity to uncover the construction of economic and social life through realist narrative. The antinomies of subject and object are therefore also at the heart of the ensuing debate between Lukács, Brecht, and Bloch over the adequacy of various modes of art.⁸ The interest of the exchanges here is not only for their internal logical dynamics, but also for the range of issues brought in their wake — problems of popular art, realism, avant-gardism, media, and finally, political and nonpolitical modernism. What is more, the concept of art as articulated in the debates lays a claim to cognitive as well as aesthetic status and presupposes forms of aesthetic experience that have a binding relationship to the real itself, that is to say, to those realms that have traditionally been differentiated from the realm of the aesthetic.

Later, Louis Althusser reorganized the category of the subject, defining its constitution in terms of ideology.

⁸See especially the essays collected in *Aesthetics and Politics*, Perry Anderson, et al., eds. (London: New Left Books, 1977)

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[I]deology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all) or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday polic (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"⁹

The question Althusser poses for critical theory is, What is the relation between aesthetic practice and ideological practice? Althusser claims that if works of art do not simply replicate the ideological material of a given epoch, they nevertheless do take the ideologies as their material of construction. How they do so, and how their presentation of ideological materials is then reappropriated as an instrument in the project of a particular class is just the question that a materialist conception of art must answer.

Althusser's analysis of the subject was made via the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan as well as Marx. Lacan's so-called "mirror stage" of development serves as an exemplary situation of how the subject is structured with respect to the body.¹⁰ The mirror-stage denotes that moment when the child acquires a sense of his own body's unity through a process of identification with an external object, the image in the mirror. The apprehension of bodily unity is the support of the division between a coherent self and that "other" against which the self is perceived. For the very exteriority of the mirror image anticipates what will become in Lacan's account the fundamental characteristic of the ego: a mirage of coherence and centrality through

⁹Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 174

¹⁰Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London and New York: W. W. Norton, 1977)

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which the subject is seduced into misrecognizing its actual alienation and fragmentation. The ultimate resolution of this situation comes not by insistence on self-identity and autonomy, but only by the acceptance of the individual's implication in the domain of intersubjectivity, that is, in language.¹¹ Thus Lacan can assert that the unconscious is structured like a language since it comes into being as a result of the structures that transform the subject as it enters into language's symbolic code. With Althusser, then, one can rewrite Lacan's slogan, "the unconscious is structured like a language," in materialist terms as "the subject is structured like a mode of production."¹² The Althusserian subject is not the centered subject of humanist epistemology and aesthetics, but is precisely decentered to the degree that it is the bearer of different, often contradictory structures.

More recent work in critical theory has continued the project begun by the above authors. Whereas Althusser displaces the subject into the structure of ideological practices, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Jacques Derrida displace the subject into language and textuality, and Michel Foucault displaces the subject into history and the geneologies of power. While the very real differences between this later, poststructuralist project of undermining, dismantling, and deconstructing objects and subjects through the endless differring and deferring of signification in textuality, and a materialist project whose economy is articulated on the basis of concepts such as the production of signs and the struggle of specific historical systems of signification are

¹¹The literature on Lacan is vast, but in the present context see especially Peter Dews, Logics of Disintegration. Post-structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory (London: Verso, 1987).

¹²Michael Sprinkler, Imaginary Relations. Aesthetics and Ideology in the Theory of Historical Materialism (London: Verso, 1987), 199

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enough to cast doubt on the possibility or fruitfulness of a rapprochement, there are nevertheless significant convergences and mutual challenges between poststructuralist thought and the interpretations of modernism within the strains of Marxism mentioned. The common criticisms of idealism, metaphysics, logocentrism (taken as the discourse of a ruling ideology), and the humanist subject suggest that a sharp and serious confrontation between these two systems of thought is precisely what is needed in architectural theory at this moment. With this suggestion one wishes to avoid the worst pitfalls both of vulgar marxism — in particular the difficulties involved in claiming that the base of any social formation is some brute facticity made of stuff more solid than signs — and the equally inadequate critical perspective of a domesticated and formalized deconstructionism that talks only about the signs themselves. Certain themes from poststructuralist thought will find their way into the present study. While the ideas of a number of poststructuralist writers may be glimpsed between the lines of this thesis, it is the transformations and extensions of the concepts of reification and mediation made by Fredric Jameson — who of all recent critics has perhaps most fruitfully merged poststructuralist and Marxist analyses — that especially inform my project.¹³

It should be underscored that this study is not an exposition of these various positions. Neither is it a philology of the concepts of functionalism, *Sachlichkeit*, or other trajectories of modernism. (Indeed such an exposition or philology could be the material of several more dissertations.) It is rather an elaboration and extension of

¹³In particular, see Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). The work of Terry Eagleton could be added to such a program.

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certain concepts derived from these intellectual traditions to the work of the architects under study. If there are important parallels and models for such an extension in the fields of literary criticism and in the art critical circle of the journal October, the architectural material under study here requires significant modifications of the theories with which it is read, even as the theories enable the construction of new reading practices for architecture.

Selected architectural projects, buildings, and writings of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer will provide examples of what I understand by a posthumanist modern architecture in terms of a dialectic of subject and object. Each of these architects produced a body of work that delineates precise social agendas as well as aesthetic preferences and offered architectures that would be adequate to the social orders envisioned. In order to explicate the claimed posthumanist shift, and to go beyond received historical interpretive methods that maintain rigid partitions between intrinsic and extrinsic criteria, accounts must be given of the *affiliations*¹⁴ that exist between the world of ideas and forms, on the one hand, and the world of politics, power, artistic traditions and institutions, intellectual communities, and ideology, on the other. Nor can such relationships in the cases of our examples be construed as very straightforward. While most interpreters would agree that any artwork is burdened to

¹⁴The concept of affiliation is from Edward Said. Said sees the relationship of affiliation as replacing the continuity, community, and legitimacy provided by biological relations or filiations. "Thus if a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority — involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict — the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms — such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and 'life,' whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society." The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 19-20

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some extent with its occasion, with the contextual circumstances from which it emerged, architecture is not easily reduced to an unselfconscious product of the circumstances of its making. The formal organizations and perceptual conventions of architecture have an inexorable degree of autonomy. And yet, the works to be considered are not wholly inward, self-referential, or self-sufficient; they explicitly refuse exemption from art's socio-political vocation. The works, as has been said, *situate themselves in the world*, taking on disciplinary and social ideologies as their raw material. Thus, in order to explicate the different kinds of affiliations of interest here, it will not be enough to speak of disinfected formal objects and how their parts have been equilibrated and integrated into a system that can be understood without external references; nor can we mistake for parts and pieces of the external socio-political world those irreducibly artistic categories and concepts. What I wish to suggest instead is that it should be possible to recognize affiliations *within the forms themselves*. Whatever methods one calls upon to explicate those affiliations will always involve an interpretive leap between two unlike and unequal realms: the one formal, defined by certain conventions of artistic practice, the other some different (and larger) form of social and material reality. Nevertheless, artistic form carries within its own construction a capacity for quite palpable interaction with the world; indeed, this capacity is an infrangible precondition for art's functionality as a mode of knowledge and a producer of subjectivities. It is in the different exercises of this capacity that the various positions of our protagonists will be seen, according to the various possible relationships between subject and object.

Significance of the study within current historiography

The motivation for much current scholarship in modern architectural history is the desire to fill a gap in the record or rehabilitate an underestimated event or aspect of an architect's work. Surely such remedial work is crucial to a more adequate understanding of modernism. Recent and ongoing studies of such "precursors" as Adolf Loos or such "followers" as Giuseppe Terragni, to mention only two, as well as reevaluations of "masters" like Peter Behrens, Heinrich Tessenow, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto, have indeed challenged the received view of a monolithic modernism through archival discoveries and historical explanations. Often, however, in dealing with the particular sort of material under consideration in this study — that is, the work of architects neither minor nor major — something else happens. Rather than becoming a revisionary or interventionary movement across established lines of demarcation (I am thinking of various stylistic definitions or theoretical categories such as "functionalism," "utopianism," "traditionalism," "abstraction," "representation," etc.), architectural historiography simply revalidates the canonic view of modernism by adding new but self-confirming information. Or alternatively, historiography reacts against the canon — as is the case with many "postmodern" revisions — but simply by reversing its values, not by challenging its definition. Within the still spotty expositions of Hilberseimer's work emerging from a group headed by Marco De Michelis and published in a special issue of Rassegna,¹⁵ as well as those published by The Art Institute of Chicago as In the Shadow of Mies,¹⁶ with

¹⁵Rassegna 27 (September 1986)

¹⁶In the Shadow of Mies. Ludwig Hilberseimer, Architect, Educator, and Urban Planner (New York: The Art Institute of Chicago and Rizzoli 1988)

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the single exception, perhaps, of Richard Pommer's essay, Hilberseimer is related to the canon for better or worse, with few questions asked about the doctrines and dogmas in whose light Mies and other "masters" stand. Francesco Dal Co's "Hannes Meyer e la venerabile scuola di Dessau,"¹⁷ on the other hand, is a provocative revisionist essay on Meyer's position in the context of the European avant-gardes and the Bauhaus. This and Claude Schnaidt's Hannes Meyer,¹⁸ now twenty-five years old, are still the only treatments of Meyer's writings and projects other than brief and usually derogatory mentions of Meyer as the "other" director of the Bauhaus.¹⁹

Within the received historiography of modern architecture, two concepts have been maintained as definitive. First is functionalism, the intersection of brute facts of utility with objective design methodologies and standardized means of production. The versions of *neue Sachlichkeit* of Meyer and Hilberseimer have been taken to be paradigmatic of functionalism. Second is the avant-garde, characterizations of which have usually depended on some notion of a self-referential and self-critical formal practice as well as the incorporation of advanced technology. Again, and not without a certain contradiction, the projects and writings of Meyer and Hilberseimer have been seen to participate in avant-garde practice and to stand in sharp contrast to the more "traditional," "representational" *Sachlichkeit* of Werkbund members like Hermann

¹⁷Francesco Dal Co, "Hannes Meyer e la venerabile scuola di Dessau'," introduction to Hannes Meyer, Architettura o rivoluzione (Padua: Marsilio, 1973)

¹⁸Claude Schnaidt, Hannes Meyer. Buildings, projects and writings (Teufen: Verlag Arthur Niggli, 1965)

¹⁹This dissertation was substantially complete just before the publication of Hannes Meyer 1889-1954 architekt urbanist lehrer (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1989) and will not address the essays presented there. I am aware that two students in Zurich and Frankfurt are working on the Hannes Meyer material, but I know nothing more than that they are researching the archives. No doubt the centennial of his birth, 1989, will prompt more studies.

Introduction

Muthesius or Heinrich Tessenow and the *Heimatsschutz*. These two concepts, functionalism and the avant-garde, have been supposed to describe fundamental demarcations within modern architecture upon which corollaries of utopianism and historical determinism have been based. The analyses of this thesis will lead us to suggest that the interpretive concepts of functionalism and autotelic formalism as definitive factors of modernism are both called into question by a thematization of the posthumanist subject. The study undertakes to challenge the received view through a historical explanation and ideological criticism of this thematization. It seeks to reveal the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in posthumanist architecture in its various forms, and to explicate the internal resistances to its self-declared forward movement.

In an alternative theorization of the avant-garde, more recent commentaries have often been based on some version of the concept of integrating art and life or art and industry.²⁰ But this thesis will attempt to make the theorization of that integration at once more specific and more complicated, finding the concept more or less explicitly elaborated in the writings and projects of the architects studied. Indeed, what links the architects chosen for study here is the practice of *Aufhebung* or sublation—the reintegration of art with social practice through either the negation (Meyer) or radical reformulation (Hilberseimer) of traditional concepts of architecture. What distinguishes the two architects are their different positions on the status of the subject in a collective, mass-cultural, and mass-industrial world.

²⁰ Above all, see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Sources of primary material

The Hannes Meyer archives are divided between the Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich — which holds most of the drawings for the architectural projects — and the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main — which holds much of Meyer's correspondence. Meyer's most important writings were published in journals of the period and have already been collected as Hannes Meyer. Bauen und Gesellschaft. Schriften, Briefe, Projekte.²¹ The Ludwig Karl Hilberseimer Archives — including Hilberseimer's theoretical and art critical writings as well as his early architectural projects — are held at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago. His important writings and projects were published in his books and in journals of the period. These journals, books, and archives constitute the primary sources of material for this thesis.

Perhaps it should be noted finally that this thesis is neither a monographic comparison nor an exhaustive study of the protagonists. It is not concerned primarily with archival "discoveries," chronologies, or attributions. I would call it an exercise in *interpretive scholarship*. As such, to the sources of primary material could correctly be added that body of work designated as critical theory.

²¹Hannes Meyer. Bauen und Gesellschaft. Schriften, Briefe, Projekte (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1980)

I. **Giedion versus Modernity:
the Protraction of the
Centered Subject**

The fiction of the individual subject — so-called bourgeois individualism — had of course, always been a key functional element in the bourgeois cultural revolution, the reprogramming of individuals to the "freedom" and equality of sheer market equivalence. As this fiction becomes ever more difficult to sustain (or, to use the somewhat mythic terminology of the Frankfurt School, as the old "autonomy" of the bourgeois subject is increasingly lost under the effects of disintegration and fetishization), more desperate myths of the self are generated, many of which are still with us today. [Such a myth of the self], which comes into being as a protest and defense against reification, ends up furnishing a powerful ideological instrument in the perpetuation of an increasingly subjectivized and psychologized world....

Understood as a practice and a mode of knowledge rather than a stylistic category or formal canon, modern architecture can be explicated as the invention and elaboration of new strategies by which objects are formed, which is at the same time the production of new concepts, categories, and modes of perception and experience of visual and spatial phenomena. Modern architecture is a specific but interminable set of conceptual procedures and formal operations that has as its raw material the very structural conditions of modernity — the alienation, fragmentation, and reification consequent of the advance of industrial capitalism — and as its historical function the systematic unraveling, demystification, and secular decoding of those inherited traditional paradigms that constitute the disciplinary terrain of architecture. In a *subjective* sense, then, modern architecture plays a significant role in an ongoing cognitive revolution — that extended process of intellectual transformation whereby a society whose life habits and perceptual apparatus were formed by other, now anachronistic, modes of production are effectively reprogrammed for life in the new industrialized world. This subjective, analytical, and critical vocation is the complement of the *objective* mission to produce the very referent — the newly equilibrated spatial and temporal organizations, the newly secularized and disenchanting objects of mass reproduction, the daily life of mechanization, rationalization, and abstraction — in short, that very life world of which this new representational system will then claim to be the realistic and inevitable reflection. The problem of the subject is as crucial for an analysis of modernism as is the problem of the object, particularly if one holds that the forms of human consciousness and the mechanisms of constructing and representing our relation with the world are not timeless and everywhere the same, but rather situation specific and

historically produced.¹

That the writings of Sigfried Giedion confront both aspects of modern architecture, the subjective and the objective, has already been recognized. Ignasi de Solà-Morales, for one, has written,

[T]o understand the work of art it was necessary to reverse the criteria that derived from the conditions of the object and to emphasize those that related to the productive subject, and especially to the viewing subject.... References to technical conditions or to the content of works of art are thus relegated to a secondary level in comparison to a history of vision which emerges as the protagonist in the evolution in art. And such a history of vision is obviously a history of the subject, and of its capacity for the production of meaning.... At the moment of cultural crisis in which this shift occurred, the subject alone seemed to constitute a secure point of reference for the reconstruction, in some way, of the order of reality.... Perhaps it is necessary to remember why Space, Time and Architecture and Mechanization Takes Command are in fact two complementary works that explain the changes comprising the modern condition of industrialized society from the point of view of changes in sensibility — i.e., from visual categories.²

We will return later to the importance of vision and sight for an understanding of Giedion's construction of the subject. More generally, Giedion himself specified the subjective character of modernism as a special kind of protracted humanism: an unremitting belief in the individual consciousness as a monadic and autonomous center

¹Jameson, The Political Unconscious, 151 ff.

²Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Toward a Modern Museum: From Riegl to Giedion," Oppositions 25 (Fall 1982): 69-77

of activity able to maintain its stability against the plurality of divisive and corrosive effects of modernity which threatened its constitution.

What is of interest in the present context is not the denunciation of Giedion's construction of the centered subject and its significations,³ so much as an understanding of the historical emergence of that construction within the discourse of modern architecture (a discourse, I will argue in the later sections of this thesis, that was concerned variously with the projection, compensation, or elaboration of a quite different subjectivity designated as posthumanism). That Giedion's centered subject is a conceptual mirage will be my suggestion here, but more: that the insertion of that centered subject performs a precise ideological function and is itself susceptible to historical causation. We will come to see that alternative, posthumanist subject positions can be detected within the very formal logic of modern space-time simultaneity and mechanization extolled by Giedion, but which provide concrete challenges to his conception of the self as a homogeneous and consistent whole. Nevertheless, the reckoning on Giedion's construction of the subject comes due, I shall argue, not in his epistemology, but rather in his aesthetics. And, therefore, my analysis in this section will be advanced in two parts: first, an argument that Giedion's epistemology is relatively sound⁴; and second, a suggestion that his aesthetic preferences are part of a more general strategy of containment of twentieth-century

³The centered subject has of late been the target of criticisms from leftist, feminist, and poststructuralists alike. The centered subject is denounced as a bourgeois ideological phenomenon, and the signs of the "end of man" (Foucault) are welcomed as the herald of some new postindividualistic state of things. The investigation here learns from such criticisms but emphasizes the historicity of the concept of the centered subject within architectural criticism.

⁴Relative, that is, to certain other histories of modern architecture with which I shall briefly compare Giedion's.

individualism suffering from the aftershocks of reification, a strategy which, as I say, was already being exploded from within modern architectural design practice itself.⁵

Manfredo Tafuri has used the term "operative criticism" to name certain aspects of the work of eighteenth-century writers like the Abbé Laugier and Francesco Milizia, as well as twentieth-century modern critics and historians like Nikolaus Pevsner, Bruno Zevi, Reyner Banham, and Sigfried Giedion, all of whom seem compelled to make of history a guide to actual design practice.

What is normally meant by *operative criticism* is an analysis of architecture (or of the arts in general) that, instead of an abstract survey, has as its objective the planning of a precise poetical tendency, anticipated in its structures and derived from historical analyses programmatically distorted and finalized.⁶

But we can make a first distinction, finer than Tafuri's, between the Enlightenment's critical instrumentalization of invented origins, like Laugier's prescriptive primitive hut, and what I shall call a *normative history* of modern architecture.⁷ The distinction lies, I think, in the fact that modern criticism extends the instrumentalization or operativity of

⁵A criticism of Sigfried Giedion's history of modern architecture runs the risk of becoming something like the flogging of a dead horse. Giedion's modern movement is *the* modern movement which has been pronounced dead again and again recently by historians and architects alike. Yet such proclamations are too often run through contemporary discussions without adequate knowledge of exactly what is being rejected or what that rejection entails. I believe that returning to Giedion's historiography, and in particular his *Space, Time and Architecture*, should help focus our attention on a few issues in our now problematic relationship to modernism.

⁶Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1980), 141

⁷There are, of course, numerous models for a normative history within various intellectual traditions, but among the most rigorous is that of Imre Lakatos, "History of Science and Its Rational Reconstruction," *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 13 (1971); and Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

criticism to *history per se* rather than from invented origins. The distinction can be seen in Giedion's Space, Time and Architecture.⁸

In his dissertation with Heinrich Wölfflin, Spätbarocker und romantischer Klassizismus,⁹ Giedion had already devoted an extended study to the late baroque and romantic classical periods, thus entering into the realm of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century artistic production which was then, in 1922, considered marginal. Despite this first-hand knowledge of the period immediately preceding mid-nineteenth-century developments, and notwithstanding that various baroque experiments are subsumed into the discussion of Space, Time and Architecture, romantic classicism plays a very small part in Giedion's study of modernism. Moreover, while Giedion seeks to treat modern architecture in the broadest possible terms — as encompassing construction, planning, social problems, scientific thought, other arts, and objects and routines of daily life — his historical progression from the formal exuberance of the baroque, to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century technical innovations, to the new architecture of the 1920s and 30s seems suspiciously selective. Giedion's own explanation of his historiographical method as emulating that of Jakob Burkhardt is crucial:

In Civilization of the Renaissance, Burkhardt emphasized sources and records rather than his own opinions. He treated only fragments of the life of the period but treated them so skillfully that a picture of the whole forms in the readers' minds. Jakob Burckhardt had no love for his own time: he saw during the

⁸Sigfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941-). The references that follow are to the fifth edition, 1974.

⁹Sigfried Giedion, Spätbarocker und romantischer Klassizismus (München, 1922)

forties an artificially constituted Europe which was on the verge of being overwhelmed by a flood of brutal forces.... But Burkhardt was a man of great vitality, and a man of vitality cannot entirely desert his own time.... His Civilization of the Renaissance aimed at an objective ordering of factual material, but in it his greatest efforts are devoted to uncovering the *origins of the man of today*.¹⁰

This last desideratum is of the sort Tafuri finds suspect. But Giedion here makes explicit an inevitable condition typical of any history: the recovery of the codes for the interpretation of the past can only be achieved by starting from present codes, and of course, present contextual factors tend to distort our statements about the past. Indeed, Giedion continues,

But I owe as large a debt to the artists of today as to these guides of my youth. It is they who have taught me to observe seriously objects which seemed unworthy of interest, or of interest only to specialists. Modern artists have shown that mere fragments lifted from the life of a period can reveal its habits and feelings; that one must have the courage to take small things and raise them to large dimensions.... The historian, the historian of architecture especially, must be in close contact with contemporary conceptions. Only when he is permeated by the spirit of his own time is he prepared to detect those tracts of the past which previous generations have overlooked.¹¹

The conventions and values of the architectural disciplinary apparatus as received by Giedion enabled him to cut his way through the overwhelming mass of data and experience in which he was personally involved, to choose the new architecture of Le

¹⁰Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, 3-4; my emphasis

¹¹Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, 4-5

Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies as a *donnée* or limiting case, and then to refit it with an ancestry and a geneology. In his normative history, the new architecture is justified not by *inventing* a past, as a Laugier might have done, but by a coherent and critical selection and deformation — launched from a specific historical present — of a real, discovered past. The "confusion" of the nineteenth century is left behind — only the "potentialities in construction" and the "changed organization of society" are carried through — and the architecture of Giedion's present is connected with the monuments of the past. Thus, the spiral lantern and weaving together of interior and exterior space of Francesco Borromini's church of Sant' Ivo in Rome becomes the prior impulse behind Vladimir Tatlin's project for a Monument to the Third International (fig. 101); Giuseppe Valadier's scheme for the Piazza del Popolo harbors a similar relation of horizontal and vertical planes as Theo van Doesburg's countercompositions (fig. 102); the undulating walls and their relation to their sites of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane and of Lansdowne Crescent in Bath are of the same "essence" as Le Corbusier's Algiers project (figs. 103, 104); and the neolithic "Tomb of the Giants" in Sardinia becomes the "mythic connotation" of Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp (fig. 106).¹² These various "constituent facts" of architectural form travel through space and time and, through the pressures of different contexts, reemerge into new prominence.

Before returning to Giedion's foundational notion of constituent facts, we must further distinguish normative history from what I shall call substantive or prophetic

¹²Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 115-19, 152-55, 156-59, 577-78, respectively

history.¹³ This latter is not satisfied with a simple complicity or shared logic of a disciplinary apparatus between historiography and contemporaneous theories of design. Rather, it reorganizes past history and, at the same time, forces *future* history by offering solutions for design problems not yet known. We could say, roughly, that in contrast to the most ambitious piece of normative history, which would produce an account of the present as a kind of unification of the whole *past*, substantive historiography seeks to give an account of *the whole of history* — past, present, and future.

To take just one example, the summation of Nikolaus Pevsner's An Outline of European Architecture¹⁴ and Pioneers of Modern Design¹⁵ is a substantive history, and exhibits two characteristic features of such. The first is a description of a structural pattern among the events that make up the whole past and a projection of this pattern towards the future, which implicitly makes the claim that events in the future will either repeat or complete this pattern. The second is an explanatory theory which accounts for this pattern in causal terms.¹⁶ Pevsner's pattern is a sine curve of Western civilization, born out of pre-history, surviving its Merovingian infancy, and reaching the virile maturity of Gothic times. But after the "summit of the High Renaissance" came the

¹³This distinction and the discussion that follows are based on Arthur Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965). Danto analyzes the differences between "substantive" and "analytic philosophies" of history.

¹⁴Nikolaus Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture (Pelican Books, 1943-)

¹⁵Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936)

¹⁶Danto insists that "an explanatory theory qualifies as a philosophy of history only insofar as it is connected with a descriptive theory. There are any number of causal theories which seek to account for historical events in the most general terms — explainable by reference to racial or climatic or economic factors. But these theories are at best contributions to the social sciences, and are not, as such, philosophies of history." Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History, 2

"first symptoms of the aging of the West." With Mannerism, the West was becoming distinctly perverse. By the nineteenth century, Western civilization had fallen into a diseased state.¹⁷ Given this pattern, present and future architectural production must discover and develop what Pevsner asserts is *the* style for the twentieth century, the next apogee in the trajectory. This pattern, which is the descriptive theory, will presumably continue as the spirit of each new age finds its true expression. And the attempt to link up these expressions with some sort of Hegelian *Zeitgeist* as the causal factor constitutes the explanatory theory of Pevsner.¹⁸

One could similarly construct the pattern of Reyner Banham's description of architectural progress through the first machine age of hand-scaled machines and the second of electronic machines, with technological determinism as the explanatory theory and the driving force of architecture.¹⁹ But the general point is this: from examinations such as these, we can say that the attitude of this sort of history is *prophetic* towards the future. It differs from normative history in that it makes projections into the *historical* future, and this is an important qualification. As Arthur Danto writes,

To ask for the significance of an event, in the *historical* sense of the term, is to ask a question which can be answered only in the context of a *story*. The

¹⁷I owe this scheme to various courses given at MIT by Stanford Anderson, and to his unpublished lecture delivered to the Architectural Association, London, spring 1964, circulated in MS. See also Anderson's review of Pevsner's *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1968) in *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 53 (September 1971): 274-75

¹⁸On Pevsner's Hegelianism, see David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), part III.

¹⁹See Stanford Anderson, "Architecture and Tradition that isn't 'Trad, Dad'," in *The History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture*, ed. Marcus Whiffen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

identical event will have a different significance in accordance with what different sets of *later* events it may be connected. Stories constitute the natural context in which events acquire historical significance.... But obviously, to tell a story is to exclude *some* happenings.... Equally obviously, we can only tell the story in which [an event] *E* figures relevantly if we are aware of what later events *E* is related to, so there is a certain sense in which we can tell only *true* stories about the *past*. It is this sense which is somehow violated by substantive philosophies of history. Using just the same sense of significance as historians do, which presupposes that the events are set in a story, philosophers of history seek for the significance of events before the later events, in connection with which the former *acquire* significance, have happened. The pattern they project into the future is a narrative structure. They seek, in short, to tell the story before the story can properly be told. And the story they are interested in is, of course, the whole story, the story of history as a whole.²⁰

Substantive histories of architecture introduce serious mythicizations into the discipline, which are reinforced by the mutual epistemological dependency between history and design and the process of ever reinforcing their own stabilizing ties. Moreover, the interdependence of history and design coupled with historical prophecies make it impossible to identify any robust system of expectations by which to measure the trajectories of contemporary design practice and clarify its immanent processes; rather interpretive analysis of the present can only reaffirm the values already predicted by design practice.

What all this suggests, then, is that substantive or prophetic historiography can be shown to be problematic, or even illegitimate, on an epistemological level. But the

²⁰Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History, 11-12

same sort of epistemological refutation cannot be made, I think, against Giedion's normative historiography. For Giedion, unlike Pervsner, the work of architecture is not part of some genetic process wherein it is understood as emerging from this or that prior moment of style and directed toward some subsequent one; nor is it guided by some metaphysical ground given as something extrinsic and beyond it. Rather the work is interrogated in terms of the formal and semantic conditions *of a present*. Giedion's model entails the epistemological insight that we, the interpreters, are the conveyors of the past into the present, that historical understanding is essentially a mediation or translation of past meanings into the present. It entails the architectural-critical insight that the disciplinary apparatus defines the terms of that mediation, placing restraints upon interpretation not because history or causation is hidden behind the architectural object, but rather because contingent historical circumstances exist at the same level of surface particularity as the object itself. Critical interpretive inquiry operates in the irreducibly architectural realm between those received disciplinary conventions, which seem to generate or enable the architect's intention to make architecture, and those present forms in which the intention is transcribed. Giedion thus rejects, even as he learns from, those interpretive models that see architecture either as the efficient representation of a preexisting historical ground or as a wholly detached and autonomous formal system.

Giedion's notion of "constituent facts" specifies his selection and deformation of past codes.

Constituent facts are those tendencies which, when they are suppressed, inevitably reappear. Their recurrence makes us aware that these are elements

which, all together, are producing a *new tradition*. Constituent facts in architecture, for example, are the undulating of the wall, the juxtaposition of nature and the human dwelling, the open ground plan. Constituent facts in the nineteenth century are the new potentialities in construction, the use of mass production in industry, the changed organization of society.²¹

What is proposed here, it seems, is an interpretive system in which the particular forms of the period in question are rewritten according to the paradigm of another, overarching history of forms which is taken as the former's master text or Ur-form and proposed as its essential hidden or unconscious meaning. The risk of such a rewriting according to some preordained master code is, of course, a radical impoverishment of the material in question. And if we only go this far, Giedion would surely remain open to accusations of a formalism that sees only visual homomorphisms. But Giedion further insists on a periodization of the modern forms according to a distinctive spatial conception of simultaneity and space-time, his third space conception,²² which

²¹Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 18

²²"To summarize briefly: There are three stages of architectural development. During the first stage — the first space conception — space was brought into being by the interplay between volumes. This stage encompassed the architecture of Egypt, Sumer, and Greece. Interior space was disregarded. The second space conception began in the midst of the Roman period when interior space and with it the vaulting problem started to become the highest aim of architecture.... Despite several profound differentiations, this second space conception persisted throughout the period from the Roman Pantheon to the end of the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century forms an intermediary link. A spatial analysis of its buildings indicates that elements of all the different phases of the second stage are simultaneously intermingled.... The third space conception set in at the beginning of this century with the optical revolution that abolished the single viewpoint of perspective. This had fundamental consequences for man's conception of architecture and the urban scene. The space-emanating qualities of free-standing buildings could again be appreciated. We recognize an affinity with the first space conception. Just as at its beginning, architecture is again approaching sculpture and sculpture is approaching architecture. At the same time the supreme preoccupation of the second space conception — the hollowing out of interior space — is continued, although there is a profoundly different approach to the vaulting problem. New elements have been introduced: a hitherto unknown interpenetration of inner and outer space and an interpenetration of different levels (largely an effect of the automobile), which has forced the incorporation of movement as an inseparable element of

envelopes spheres of cultural production as diverse as Cubist painting, Apollinaire's poetry (c. 1911), Einstein's Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper (1905), and later verifications of the conception such as Edgerton's stroboscopic photography, as well as the architectural production that Giedion canonized (figs. 105, 107, 108).²³ And so, on the opposite side from formalism, Giedion's periodizing practice is covered — and not entirely contradictorily — by that well-known conceptual target designated as historicism.²⁴ And it must be admitted that any fruitful use of the notion of a coherent structurality of a historical or cultural period, imposed upon what is inexorably a heterogeneous and open field of activities, tends to give the impression of a facile parallelism or homologization — a seamless tissue of entities and events, each of which expresses some world-view, period style, or unified inner truth which is isolated and privileged as a master code or inner essence capable of explicating all elements or features of the material in question.

architecture. All these have contributed to the space conception of the present day and underlie its evolving tradition." Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, lv-lvi

²³Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, 434-36

²⁴To be more specific, I am thinking of Althusser's "expressive causality." "This is the model that dominates all Hegel's thought. But it presupposes in principle that the whole in question be reducible to an *inner essence*, of which the elements of the whole are then no more than the phenomenal forms of expression, the inner principle of the essence being present at each point in the whole, such that at each moment it is possible to write the immediately adequate equation: *such and such an element* (economic, political, legal, literary, religious, etc., in Hegel) = *the inner essence of the whole*. Here was a model which made it possible to think the effectivity of the whole on each of its elements, but if this category — inner essence/outer phenomenon — was to be applicable everywhere and at every moment to each of the phenomena arising in the totality in question, it presupposed that the whole had a certain nature, precisely the nature of a 'spiritual' whole in which each element was expressive of the entire totality as a 'pars totalis.'" Louis Althusser, Reading Capital (London: Verso, 1979 [orig. French, 1968]), 186-87; emphasis in original. For discussions of the distinctions among historicism, totalization, and mediation, see Jameson, The Political Unconscious, 23 ff. and passim.; Martin Jay, Marxism and Totality (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); and Michael Sprinkler, Imaginary Relations. Aesthetics and Ideology in the Theory of Historical Materialism (London: Verso, 1987), 153 ff. and passim.

Yet a construal of Giedion's thesis as either naively historicist or rigidly formalist, I believe, is reductive. I would want to grant Giedion's interpretive practice at least a local validity on two points. First, by assuming that, as a result of specific historical circumstances, Giedion's theory pertaining to those circumstances arises from a particular and already constituted disciplinary apparatus. And second, by understanding it to have confronted — explicitly, thematically, and in the form of an epistemological and historiographical problem — a difficulty that is, in fact, inherent in all materialist criticism: that of providing mediations between social phenomena, the formal properties of the architectural work, and the psychic economy organized by the latter; or, in different terminology, the problem of the *insertion of the subject*. Indeed, it is this mediating practice which will be retained in the present thesis. What will differ is the result. In Giedion's history, the standard oppositions between the interpreter and the interpreted, private experience and public conventions, the unconscious and the conscious, the personal or unknowable and the universal and comprehensible, are all displaced and reanchored in a new conception of the historical context and psychic situation wherein the individual subject can be recentered in its social present by the sheer lucidity of visual form. The importance of Giedion's conception of visuality, his "optical revolution," can now be considered.

Giedion's notion of the "Eternal Present" is the subjective corollary of the objective vocation of constituent facts. His main thesis is this: 1) that the modern movement in architecture was trying to heal a rift in culture and the human psyche which had opened up in the nineteenth century; 2) that that rift involved a split in subjective or psychological terms between thought and feeling, and in objective,

architectural terms between form and structure, expression and construction, art and industrial production; and 3) that the reconciliation of this rift involved an elaboration of a few constituent facts. Such an elaboration would be a means for correlating human experience, space, and knowledge; a means for achieving the necessary oneness of knowledge and feeling.

Giedion's characterization of the conditions of modernity, which the terms rationalization and reification can be taken to designate, is not so different from that of philosophers and sociologists such as Georg Simmel, Max Weber, and Georg Lukács, who saw traditional cultural institutions — once unified, genuine, and concrete forms of social relationships — as having long since been dissolved by the corrosive effects of market relations, blasted into their component fragments, and reorganized by the processes of capitalism with its characteristic tendency toward greater efficiency according to the instrumental dialectic of means and ends. When this process finally completes its structural separation of subject from object and recolonizes each separately, new hierarchies of functions are produced according to their instrumental use, and the quantifying, rational modes of thought are overdeveloped while the more archaic functions, such as Giedion's "feeling," are bracketed off in a kind of psychic marginality.²⁵ But at the same time, it seems that for Giedion these now isolated, fragmented bits and pieces of the older unities acquire a certain coherence and autonomy of their own which in some measure serve to compensate for the dehumanization of experience that rationalization and reification bring, and to rectify the

²⁵I borrow this general formulation from Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 220 ff.

otherwise intolerable effects of the new process.²⁶ So, to return to Giedion's primary example, as vision becomes an independent mode of reception, and as sight becomes a separate activity in its own right, they generate new objects of their own which, though still the products of the processes of fragmentation, abstraction, and rationalization that operate to interdict the experience of the world according to a more holistic, auratic depth model of "feeling" — of religious iconography, say, or the experience of "natural" environments — can, at the same time, be reconfigured and projected as possible solutions, on an aesthetic level, to that genuinely contradictory situation in the concrete world of everyday life from which they first emerged. The artistic manipulations of Picasso, Le Corbusier, et al. — which employ "abstractions" such as monochromy or pure color, flattened and layered space, and "fragmented," non-perspectival points of view — are individual productions and cultural manifestations grasped as responses to a determinate situation and having the intelligibility of genuine historical gestures, provided the context is reconstructed with sufficient complexity. So, in Giedion's words, the Cubist "presentation of objects from several points of view," the "breaking up the surfaces of the natural forms into angular facets," the "extreme scarcity of colors," the "advancing and retreating planes..., interpenetrating, hovering, often transparent, without anything to fix them in realistic position," "the flattening out so that interior and exterior could be seen simultaneously," (one could go on) are "equivalent to psychic responses."²⁷ Taking on the properly utopian vocation of the newly reified sense of sight, the mission of this heightened and autonomous

²⁶Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 63 ff.

²⁷Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 437-8

visual language of space-time can be construed as restorative, at least symbolically, of the experience of psychic gratification and integration to a world drained of it.

The moment around which Giedion's interpretive system turns is, thus, a kind of visual wish-fulfillment, posited as the very dynamic of our being as individual subjects. What is necessary to underscore is the dependence of Giedion's "discovery" of the the visual logic of space-time on the increasing fragmentation, simultaneity, and abstraction of actual experience in modern everyday life. In such a situation, it is clear that his reassertion of the centered subject, the homologue of the Eternal Present at the level of the individual, is a genuinely historical act. The subject having been split from its object by the logic of social and technical development, the object must now be reconstructed by Giedion in such a way as to bear the place of the subject within itself: "*lo spettatore nel centro del quadro*" was how Giedion put it.²⁸ And here, once again, is the conjunction of criticism and design too easily dismissed by Tafuri as "operative." The viewing, interpreting subject must be placed *within* the frame of the object, "not at some isolated point outside. Modern art, like modern science, recognizes the fact that observation and what is observed form one complex situation — to observe something is to act upon and alter it."²⁹ The process of critical interpretation is transformed by Giedion into one of a hypothetical or imaginary restoration of the historical situation itself, whose reconstitution is at one with visual comprehension. The artwork is an object whose interpretation has already commenced but is never complete. As Giedion put it, "There is no static equilibrium between man and his environment, between inner

²⁸The quotation left in Italian by Giedion is from the first manifesto of futurism.

²⁹Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 5-6

and outer reality. We cannot prove in a direct way how action and reaction operate here. We can no more lay tangible hold on these processes than we can grasp the nucleus of an atom."³⁰

Giedion's effort was to chart the commerce between inner and outer reality — especially the impact of mechanization on what he conceives as our unchanging humanity, on the stability of the individual psyche — and to project new means of reconciliation. As such, his interpretive method can precisely and properly be reasserted as *mediation*. Fredric Jameson has defined this concept.

[T]he concept of *mediation* [is] the relationship between the levels or instances [of social practice], and the possibility of adapting analyses and findings from one level to another. Mediation is the classical dialectical term for the establishment of relationships between, say, the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base.... The concept of mediation has traditionally been the way in which dialectical philosophy and Marxism itself have formulated their vocation to break out of the specialized compartments of the (bourgeois) disciplines and to make connections among the seemingly disparate phenomena of social life generally. If a more modern characterization of mediation is wanted, we will say that this operation is understood as a process of *transcoding*: as the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or "texts," or two very different structural levels of reality. Mediations are thus a device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomization of social life... is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis.³¹

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 39-40

But it is in the intangible realm between inner and outer reality, between perceptual categories and modes of production, between subject and object, that there remains something disturbing about Giedion's specific theory of modern architecture. For precisely at a time when reification was penetrating into the very core of personal experience, leaving no vestiges of a non-alienated reality as its reciprocal or opposing notion, Giedion's theory — which, as we have seen, comes into being as a protest and a defense against reification — emerges as the perpetuation of a conception of a historical moment, wholly present, in which the individual subject would somehow be fully conscious of his or her determination by such extrinsic structural conditions of modernity as I have already mentioned, and would somehow be able to reintegrate and resolve these determinations in the visual experience of architectural form. Recent poststructuralist theory has shown us again and again that such a resolution, such an immanence, is a myth, an ideological mirage.³² But the impossibility of immanence means more than that Giedion was not able at his point in time to become, as it were, a poststructuralist. For in the end, Giedion's aesthetic ideology and social vision is contrary to, and must be evaluated against, the postindividual and posthumanist reversal of much of modern architecture — the side of modern architecture not considered by Giedion. In practice this architecture aimed beyond the autonomous individualism of the bourgeoisie in its heyday, took on the task of a radical and painful decentering of the consciousness of the individual subject which it confronted with a

³²I am thinking of the work of Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida, but the impossibility of such a resolution is already explicitly analyzed in Marx and Freud.

determination necessarily felt as beyond the humanist horizon, and, consciously or not, anticipated an emergent collective process of enunciating a new status of the subject after the decay of bourgeois centrism.

In the sections of this dissertation that follow I will analyze different constructions of the subject which employ the very forms of the space-time synthesis and mechanization that Giedion extols, but which enact a critical reversal of his humanism. Against Giedion's notion that modern architectural objects provide visual symbols for the integral psychological self, I wish to point to certain modern architectural objects that put into crisis the cognitive status of autonomous vision and the centered self for which that vision is a metaphor, and redirect our attention to those extrinsic processes that lie beyond individual aesthetic mastery. We will see how, in order to displace the unified subject of bourgeois humanism, certain modernist practices draw upon the effects of reification in the actual experience of such subjects, incorporating into the structure of their works the very effects of social and technical transformations that determine aesthetic representations and pitting what was increasingly felt to be the semantic reality of industrial capitalism against the formal ideologies of humanism. Such work begins from the position that critical intervention into the very mechanisms of representation and sign construction can be a motivating force of aesthetic production, but then moves in different directions: toward the critical instrumentalization of aesthetic practice (Meyer) or toward the reluctant affirmation of posthumanist anomie and distraction within aesthetic practice (Hilberseimer) — all in the name of *Sachlichkeit*. Modern architecture thus dramatizes in its very internal

structures the crucial contradiction in the ideology of the subject latent in the writings of Giedion.



52. TATLIN. Project for a monument in Moscow, 1920. This, like the Eiffel Tower and some other monuments of our time, is a contemporary realization of the urge toward the interspenetration of linear and outer space.

53. FRANCESCO BORROMINI. Sant' Ivo, Rome. Section through interior.



51. FRANCESCO BORROMINI. Sant' Ivo, Rome. Lantern with coupled columns and spiral. Culminating point for the movement that penetrates the whole design.

101. Sigfried Giedion, spread from Space, Time and Architecture showing comparison of Borromini's Sant' Ivo, Rome, with Tatlin's Monument for the Third International, Moscow

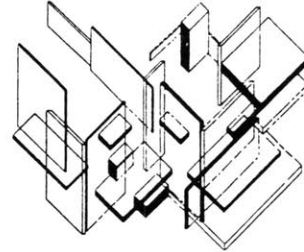
Giedion versus Modernity: The Protraction of the Centered Subject



80. Piazza del Popolo, Rome. View from the Pincio terrace, showing the different horizontal levels involved and their relations to the vertical planes in the Piazza. Valadier here touches upon a fundamental conception of our time: the relation between horizontal and vertical planes as a basis for aesthetic response.

view might lead out upon a wide green area as it does in the Place de la Concorde and in the Royal Crescent at Bath. Today this area is occupied by broad avenues and tall houses and defaced by advertising signs.

The Piazza del Popolo has remained to this day one of the most "modern" in appearance of all the great squares. To a certain extent this is due to the thoroughgoing fusion of buildings and park. Its air of modernity is owing much more, however, to the way in which different levels are brought within the same composition. The series of *places* built at Nancy in the middle of the eighteenth century had exploited the relations that can be made to hold among the vertical surfaces of buildings of different heights. In the Piazza del Popolo, Valadier embodies



81. THEO VAN DOESBURG. Relation of horizontal and vertical planes, c. 1920.

a hovering sensation in the total effect produced by his design by bringing into relation with each other two horizontal areas of different levels: the terrace on the Pincio, and the *piazza* proper. A proportion in three dimensions — not merely in two, as at Nancy — is developed.

We have seen how Borromini, in striving to lead the movement of a design through the space of the interior into outer space, anticipated a concern of modern architecture. Valadier's *piazza* touches upon another fundamental conception of our time: the relation between horizontal and vertical surfaces as a basis for aesthetic responses of a special sort. That this is one of the constituent facts in modern architecture, one of the tendencies determining its character, cannot be doubted. A drawing made about 1922 by the Dutch painter, poet, and architect, Theo van Doesburg, founder of the "Stijl" group, shows a conscious recognition of this conception (fig. 81). It depicts the interacting relations of hovering and transparent vertical and horizontal plane surfaces of a house.

To avoid misunderstanding, it may be worth repeating that neither Borromini nor Valadier worked with space con-

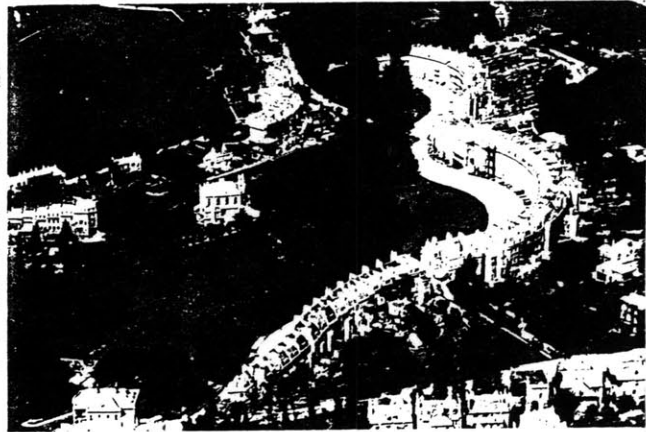
Interrelated horizontal and vertical surfaces

102. Comparison of the Valadier's Piazza del Popolo, Rome, with Van Doesburg's "interacting relations of hovering and transparent vertical and horizontal plane surfaces"

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82. FRANCESCO BORROMINI. Undulating wall of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, 1662-67. *This late baroque invention, the undulating wall, reappears in English town planning toward the end of the eighteenth century.*



83. Lansdowne Crescent, Bath, 1793. *Its serpentine windings follow the contours of the site.*



84. Bath and its crescents. *Air view. Near the center are the Royal Crescent and the Circus; below and to the left is Lansdowne Crescent.*

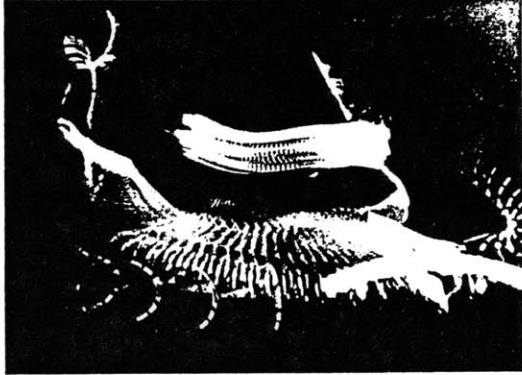


85. LE CORBUSIER. Scheme for skyscrapers in Algiers, 1931. *Late baroque space conceptions come very near to contemporary solutions like this one.*

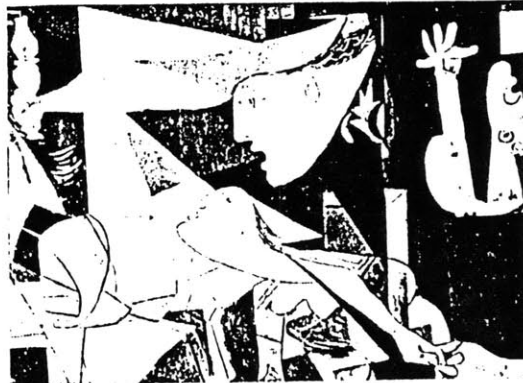
103. Comparison of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, with Lansdowne Crescent, Bath

104. Comparison of the crescents at Bath with Le Corbusier's project for Algiers

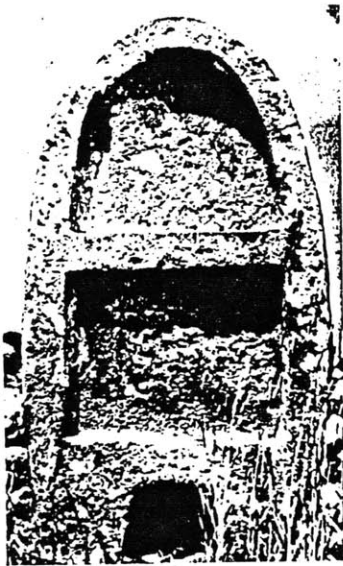
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265. EDGERTON. Speed photograph of a tennis player, 1939.



266. PICASSO. "Guernica," 1937. Detail.



344a. Stele at the neolithic monumental "Tomb of the Giants" in Sardinia.



344b. LE CORBUSIER. Pilgrimage Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamps, 1955. View from the west. A Mexican architect, R. Barropan, pointed out the secret affinity of the tower of Ronchamps with a prehistoric cult structure in Sardinia.

105. Comparison of Edgerton's stroboscopic photography with Picasso's Guernica

106. Comparison of the "secret affinity" between the Tomb of the Giants, Sardinia, and Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamps



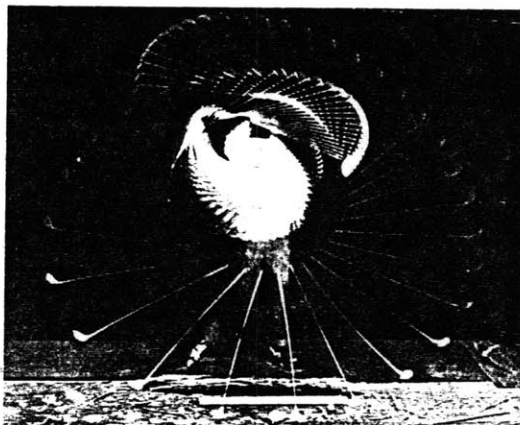
522. Rockefeller Center. Photomontage. Expressions of the new urban scale like Rockefeller Center are forcefully conceived in space-time and cannot be embraced in a single view. To obtain a feeling for their interrelations the eye must function as in the high-speed photographs of Edgerton.

our own age. The difference can be indicated by comparing it with such thirteenth-century structures as the leaning towers of the two noble families of Asinelli and Garisenda in Bologna (fig. 521). These private patrician fortresses rise magnificently into the sky, but they can be embraced at a single glance, in a

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single view. There is no uncertainty in the observer concerning their relation to each other. On the other hand, a view restricted to its central axis reveals none of the essential character of an organism like Rockefeller Center. It possesses symmetries which are senseless in reference to the aesthetic significance of the whole. The complex must be comprehended in terms of space and time analogous to what has been achieved in modern scientific research as well as in modern painting.

In Edgerton's stroboscopic studies, in which motion can be fixed and analyzed in arrested fractions of $1/100,000$ of a second, a complete movement is shown separated into its successive components (fig. 523). At Rockefeller Center the human eye must function similarly (fig. 522); it has to pick up each individual view singly and relate it to all others, combining them into a time sequence. Only thus are we able to understand its grand play of volumes and surfaces and perceive its many-sided significance.

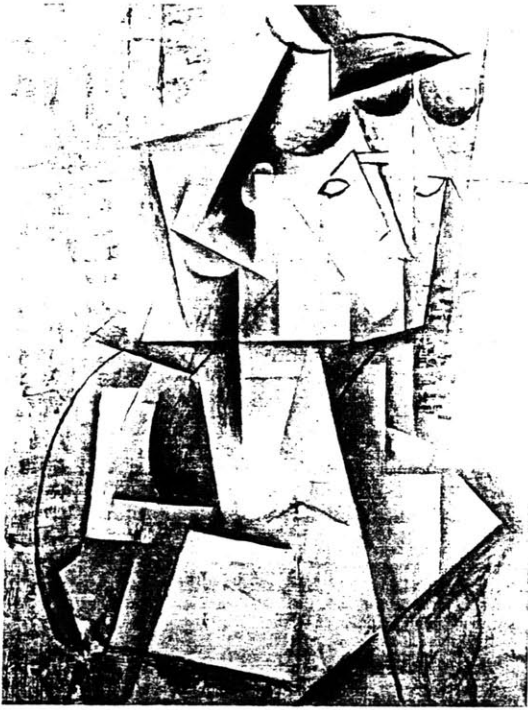


523. EDGERTON. Speed photograph of golf stroke. In Edgerton's stroboscopic studies in which motions can be fixed and analyzed in arrested fractions of $1/100,000$ of a second, a whole movement is separated into its successive components, making possible comprehension in both space and time.

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107. Comparison of Giedion's own photomontage of Rockefeller Center with Edgerton's stroboscopic photography in which "a whole movement is separated into its successive components, making possible comprehension in both space and time"

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298. PICASSO. "L'Arlésienne," 1911-12. Oil. "In the head may be seen the cubist device of simultaneity — showing two aspects of a single object at the same time, in this case the profile and the full face. The transparency of overlapping planes is also characteristic" (Catalogue of the Picasso Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1939, p. 77).

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299. WALTER GROPIUS. The Bauhaus, Dessau, 1926. Corner of the workshop wing. In this case it is the interior and the exterior of a building which are presented simultaneously. The extensive transparent areas, by dematerializing the corners, permit the hovering relations of planes and the kind of "overlapping" which appears in contemporary painting.

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108. Comparison of Picasso's L'Arlésienne with Gropius's Bauhaus, Dessau in which "the extensive transparent areas, by dematerializing the corners, permit the hovering relations of planes and the kind of 'overlapping' which appears in contemporary painting"

II. Hannes Meyer and the Radicalization of Perception

The form of the new means of production, which at first is still dominated by the old (Marx), corresponds to images in the collective consciousness in which the new is intermingled with the old. These images are wish-images, and in them the collective seeks both to sublimate and transfigure the incompleteness of the social product and the inadequacies in the social system of production. In addition, these wish-images manifest an emphatic striving for dissociation with the outmoded — which means, however, with the most recent past. These tendencies direct the visual imagination, which has been activated by the new, back to the primeval past. In the dream in which, before the eyes of each epoch, that which is to follow appears in images, the latter appears wedded to elements from prehistory, that is, of a classless society. Intimations of this, deposited in the unconscious of the collective and intermingling with the new, produce the utopia that has left its traces in thousands of configurations of life, from permanent buildings to ephemeral fashions.

Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in Reflections (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 148. I have modified the translation slightly to restructure certain phrases and to render *Wunschbilder* as "wish-images," and *aufzuheben* as "sublate." The original 1935 essay, "Paris: Die Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts," is in Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972-); the passage cited is on p. 408.

Around 1926 Hannes Meyer developed a body of work designated by the the name "cooperative" or "Co-op" (eg: figs. 201-205), a locution which Oskar Schlemmer would call Meyer's favorite.¹ Meyer's Co-op work marks a fault line in the development of modern architecture, a cleft in cultural space across which henceforth will be played the dialectic of formal paradigms already defined by the avant-garde and the altogether different perceptual conventions of mass technological society.² The disparity between these two modes is most apparently registered by what critics of Meyer's work consistently have seen as a tension between an avant-garde "constructivist aesthetic" — a visual approach to his work — and a purely "functionalist," utilitarian, and anti-aesthetic organization of building components dedicated to a social program.³ It is a disparity not of form only, but between two distinct spaces of culture — that of "high" culture with its autonomously developed formal strategies, and that of popular or mass culture and the apparatuses of its production.

¹In a letter to Tut Schlemmer, 1 December 1927, in The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer, ed. Tut Schlemmer (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 216

²Such a condition is not unique to Meyer, of course, and can be detected perhaps most emphatically in the work of the Russian avant-garde. But in the West Meyer's work stands as perhaps the key example of the dialectic of modernism and mass culture.

³See especially Francesco Dal Co, "Hannes Meyer e la 'venerabile scuola di Dessau'," introduction to Hannes Meyer, Architettura o rivoluzione (Padua: Marsilio, 1973); and Jacques Gubler, Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975). Some critics also perceive a definite shift in Meyer's design strategy around the time of his appointment as director of the architecture department at the Bauhaus. For example, Manfredo Tafuri writes, "In the works of Meyer designed between 1926 and 1930... the categorical imperative of 'construction as thoroughly thought out organization of the vital processes' [Meyer] was expressed in a contradictory manner. On the one hand, in the Petersschule and the Geneva building, we have Constructivist mechanistic metaphors not unmindful of what was being done by the Soviets at that time; on the other, in the Bernau school and even more in the five blocks Meyer added to the Törten-Dessau Siedlung begun by Gropius, form was reduced to a tendentially scientific process approaching pure technique and function...." In Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, Modern Architecture (New York: Abrams, 1979), 173

An adequate account of Meyer's modernism must treat this disparity, which is one symptom of the general difficulty of knowing and signifying in modern society, of the difference-yet-consonance between the values of progressive modernization and those of epistemic and historical continuity within the discipline of architecture. In this section of the thesis I shall attempt an exposition of Meyer's Co-op research which will show that the consistency of his position is entirely comprehensible, but only within a framework of changed relationships between design practice, architectural form, and the forces of social production and consumption at large. A discussion of these changed relationships will be progressed along several lines. First, we will see that Meyer's conception of the design process is one that has been redefined in order to collapse the distinction between the aesthetic and the practical-cognitive function of artistic signs. Design for Meyer is a signifying practice⁴ which employs appropriations of the physical materials, visual images, and formative principles of the industrialization and massification of everyday life, and seeks to negate the qualitative differences between artistic practice and the production of objects of everyday use. Second, the aesthetic response Meyer's work elicits is itself an interpretive event, a productive *performance* which shows the world as emergent through processes that are arbitrarily imposed and changeable rather than natural or universal. Finally, however, Meyer's design practice is an activity that can completely enunciate the desired change of

⁴"I shall call signifying practice the establishment and the countervailing of a sign system. Establishing a sign system calls for the identity of a speaking subject within a social framework, which he recognizes as a basis for that identity. Countervailing the sign system is done by having the subject undergo an unsettling, questionable [sic] process; this indirectly challenges the social framework with which he had previously identified, and it thus coincides with times of abrupt changes, renewal, or revolution in society." Julia Kristeva, *La Traversée des signes*, trans. in Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, Leon S. Roudiez, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 18

relationships between art and the world only through a radical negation of the discipline of architecture itself as defined within the paradigm of modernism.

What I mean to suggest by the *performativity* of Meyer's work is an enabling condition for architecture in contrast to both historical or functional determinism and authorial intentionality. When, for example, Meyer expands Marx's dictum that life determines consciousness with the statement that "the revolution in our attitude of mind to the reorganization of our world calls for a change in our media of expression,"⁵ he is asserting that the transformations of social structures necessitate the transformation of aesthetic hierarchies and require radically different forms of perception, and further implying that some social structuring force outside individual consciousness activates, conditions, and sets that consciousness in motion. In Meyer's view of artistic production, human agency is not relinquished altogether. Indeed, a crucial point in Meyer's conception of the productivity of architecture is the moment of negativity and resistance registered by the designing agent: "in every creative design appropriate to living, we *reorganize* an organized form of existence."⁶ Yet, while still allowing and accounting for the agency of the designing subject, Meyer gives a productive power to the object and the complex interplay between subject and object: "We could call the process of building a conscious patterning of the socio-economic, the techno-constructive, and the psycho-physiological elements in the social living process."⁷

⁵Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt," *Das Werk* 7 (Bern, 1926): 205-24; trans. in Claude Schnaidt, *Hannes Meyer. Buildings, projects and writings* (Teufen: Verlag Arthur Niggli, 1965)

⁶Meyer, "bauhaus und gesellschaft," in *bauhaus* 1, 1929; trans. in Schnaidt. Original is in lower case letters; my emphasis.

⁷Meyer, "Education of the Architect," a lecture to the San Carlos Academy, Mexico, 30 September 1938; partial transcript in Schnaidt, 53.

Hannes Meyer and the Radicalization of Perception

Recognizing the designing subject's partial determination by external social forces and the object's productive engagement with the viewing subject avoids the exclusive appeal to individual artistic agency by affirming the reciprocity between modes of production and modes of reception. It is this reciprocity that I am calling the performativity of perception — understood as the critical, interpretive engagement of designer, viewer, and object all plunged into the social dynamic that activates and conditions them. Thus Meyer's radicalization of the performativity of perception as a collective engagement can be distinguished from Giedion's conservative protraction of individual visual gratification, and Meyer's conception of antihumanist subjectivity can be launched.

Co-op Vitrine and the Representation of Mass Reproduction and Consumption, or the Performativity of Perception

It is because modern society does not recognize itself as an ideological *construction* that it must be *represented* as such; this is the vocation of any politically engaged art. With Hannes Meyer's Co-op Vitrine project of 1925 (figs. 206-209) we confront not only the practical, formal problem of the representation of industrialized society and the distancing of its ideological materials, but also and more fundamentally, the question of the ideological nature and function of that representation itself.⁸ The Vitrine was designed for the exhibition of Co-op products in Ghent and Basel in 1925. What qualifies the Co-op Vitrine as exemplary of such questions — for it may not be immediately obvious that the display case qualifies as a work of "art" let alone a representation — is the particular perceptual interaction with the viewing subject it generates, as well as the systematic formal procedures by which the perceptual phenomenon is constituted.

⁸Althusser states in his "A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre," in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) that he does "*not rank real art among the ideologies.*" (emphasis in original) His attempt here is to discriminate, following a traditional form/matter relation, between two different modes of apprehending the world: aesthetic practice and ideology. For Althusser, art gives form to the materials of ideology. *But neither is ideology wholly external to art.* Works of art may become the raw materials for ideological practice. Then, their aesthetic modality is *subordinated* to their ideological function, but the *irreducibly artistic structure* will enable its utilization as an ideological instrument. This formulation will be helpful in our analysis of Meyer.

At first gloss, the Vitrine, with its foregrounding of the object language of commodity production in a visual display, seems to be stigmatized precisely and easily by theories of commodity reification and alienation of subject from object, which describe the way products and productive activities under capitalism are ruthlessly rationalized and reorganized in the purely instrumental terms of means/ends efficiency: in a world where every product and form of labor has become a commodity, activities of making are stripped of their unique qualitative differentiation and become abstractly comparable through the indifferent medium of capital; and the objects made also shed their intrinsic qualities and use values and come to be arranged under the common denominator of exchange value. In the Co-op Vitrine, articles of everyday use, packaged in various shapes and sizes of cartons, cans, bottles, tubes, bags, and boxes, appear as depleted images of commodity production, distanced even further from their producers and users by the conditions of their display, which bracket off the products from the physical space of the consumer, rendering them, exactly and merely it seems, distantiated and fragmented images. Arranged as the repetitive components of so many different series of mechanical processes of stacking, extruding, and aligning, they bear no traces of human manufacture, no evidence of an individual producer's control, but rather seem to emanate auto-mechanically from an unseen assembly line.

Consequently, upon attending to the Co-op Vitrine, our own sense of self unity as individuals is threatened. In a section titled "The division of labor as the cause of the divergence of subjective and objective culture" of The Philosophy of Money, Georg Simmel seems to capture our initial sense of Meyer's presentation exactly:

The unity of an object is realized for us *only by projecting our self into the object in order to shape it according to our image so that the diversity of determinations grows into the unity of the "ego."* In the same manner, the unity or lack of unity of the object that we create affects, in a psychological-practical sense, the corresponding formation of our personality. Whenever our energies do not produce something whole as a reflection of the total personality, then the proper relationship between subject and object is missing.... Because of its fragmentary character, the product lacks the spiritual determinacy that can be easily perceived in a product of labor that is wholly the work of a *single* person. *The significance of the product is thus to be sought neither in the reflection of a subjectivity nor in the reflex of a creative spirit, but is to be found only in the objective achievement that leads away from the subject....* The broadening of consumption... is dependent upon the growth of *objective* culture, since the more objective and impersonal an object is the better it is suited to more people. Such consumable material... cannot be designed for subjective differentiation of taste, while on the other hand only the most extreme differentiation of production is able to produce the objects cheaply and abundantly enough in order to satisfy the demand for them.... [T]he product of labor in the capitalist era is an object with a decidedly autonomous character, with its own laws of motion and a character alien to the producing subject, [and] is most forcefully illustrated where the worker is compelled to buy his own product.⁹

The subjective aura of the Co-op product has disappeared in relation to the individual consumer because the commodity is now produced independently of individuals, and even its arrangement as so many fragments in its glass case indicates this disenfranchisement of individual manufacture. The aesthetic structure of the Vitrine is

⁹Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (Leipzig: Duncken und Humbolt, 1900); references are to the English translation *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 454-56; some emphasis added

determined rather by the repetitive and serially structured formation that is the very nature of mass reproduced commodities and their display.

As a straightforward and unreflective display of articles of daily use, Meyer's work may be seen to go no further than this, and thus to stand implicated in a purely technocratic, administered, and instrumental logic. As an apparatus of visual sign production involving preestablished conventions of object perception, however, the Co-op Vitrine can be understood in its specific mode of signification only by constructing the *alternative* conditions of perceptual interaction that it proposes relative to the received modernist paradigm. This would clarify its immanent (formal) meanings as well as allow us to account for the production of that quite different thing called ideology, which Althusser defines as "the imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her real conditions of existence."¹⁰ We have just broached the issue of the subject as it is constructed in its general perceptual interaction with the object. When we now introduce the more specific question of representation into our analysis, the ideological coordinates of our problem will come into focus.¹¹

A powerful instrument given by recent literary theory for the analysis of representation in terms of subjectivity is the distinction between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the utterance (*sujet d'énonciation / sujet d'énoncé*).¹²

¹⁰Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 162

¹¹The term "representation" has been charged in many, and often contradictory ways in much of recent poststructuralist and postmarxist theory, but has usually been taken to name the mirage of organic realist unification, with all of the bad ideological consequences that follow. Here I understand representation to be synonymous with "figuration" or "imaginary construction of a world" and will assume, therefore, that what follows in any form of aesthetic production is some sort of representation.

¹²"In order to describe the dialogism inherent in the denotative or historical world, we would have to turn to the psychic aspect of writing as trace of dialogue with oneself (with another), as a writer's distance from himself, as a splitting of the writer into subject of enunciation and subject of utterance.

This distinction can be summarized as follows: The self-creating and self-representing ego is a function or effect of a subject that, in actuality, is never identical with itself, always dispersed, and strung out along the chains of the discourses that constitute it. There is a radical gap between the subject split into several incommensurable faculties by the various cultural apparatuses that place contradictory ideological demands on it, and the representation of that subject through the work of art or through ordinary discourse unified in that desired state consisting in a harmony between those faculties. This gap is exemplified by the simple act of referring to myself in a sentence. When I write "Today I will purchase that product," the "I" which I name is an immediately intelligible, fairly stable point of reference which belies the more complex depths of the I that actually produces the utterance as well as the ideological mechanisms which enable and constrain that production.¹³ The former I is known to linguistic theory as the *subject of the utterance* — the topic designated by my sentence, the subject as it is designated in discourse; the latter I, roughly the writer of the sentence, is the *subject of the enunciation* — the subject of the actual act of representing, the subject of the

By the very act of narrating, the subject of narration addresses an other; narration is structured in relation to this other.... Consequently, a dialogue between the *subject* of narration (S) and the *addressee* (A) — the other. This addressee, quite simply the reading subject, represents a doubly oriented entity: signifier in his relation to the text and signified in the relation between the subject of narration and himself. This entity is thus a dyad (A1 and A2) whose two terms, communicating with each other, constitute a code system. The subject of narration (S) is drawn in, and therefore reduced to a code, to a nonperson, to an *anonymity* (as writer, subject of enunciation) mediated by a third person, the *he/she* character, the subject of utterance.... The subject of utterance, in relation to the subject of enunciation, plays the role of addressee with respect to the subject; it inserts the subject of enunciation within the writing system by making the latter pass through emptiness.... The *subject of utterance* is both representative of the subject of enunciation and represented as object of the subject of enunciation.... The subject of utterance is "dialogical," both S and A are disguised within it." Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 74-76. One should note the issue of performativity is already embedded in this dialogical relationship.

¹³Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 164-65

ideological structures that position and control speech, and also, in an expanded sense, the subject of the forces of production and consumption which make the product referred to available for purchase. The subject of the enunciation is the subject that is alienated and lost the moment it is articulated in language. In a linguistics of the *énoncé*, these two subjects seem to achieve a rough sort of representational unity, but this unity is of an imaginary kind: the convenient, conventionally unified, and self-identical pronoun "I" stands in for the ever-dispersed subject. Whereas in a linguistics of the *énonciation*, stress is placed on the relational and process-like character of language,¹⁴ which tends to undermine the conventionalized unities, identities, and fixities of representational categories, and thereby to pose the question of possible alternative conventions and signifying practices.

We can extend this linguistic distinction to the problem of representation at issue here. Understood in the terms of an act of *énonciation*, rather than as a presentation of already fixed and commodified signs, the Co-op Vitrine transforms both the immanent aesthetic structure of the work and the structured perceptual interaction of the pictorial construct with the viewer in important ways. First, rather than the familiar arrangement of isolated individual products in a shop window, the Co-op articles are presented as an image or facsimile of the industrialized manufacturing process itself, each series of products configured as if having issued from the various conveyor belts of an assembly line. Second, the very picture of the commodity producing factory, as it were, is itself framed as the overall scene of collective reception and consumption; the final, finished

¹⁴"A subject of enunciation takes shape within the gap opened up between signifier and signified that admits both structure and interplay within." Kristeva, 127-28

product to which the consumer has the most direct access is, simultaneously, the constituent element of the overall pictorial device which the "pictorial consumer" must apprehend. The work thereby stresses the *process* of commodity sign production and reception as well as the reification which that sign must undergo in its transfiguration into a pictorial construct, by making the mechanisms of the work's representation and mode of address part of its actual content, all of which is bound to result in a contradictory aesthetic. The Co-op Vitrine attempts to turn this contradiction to fruitful use, displacing the spectator from his accustomed imaginary possession of the work as a unity, but providing alternative spaces from which the viewer might appropriate the work's main fiction of mass industrialized production and consumption.

One of the registers through which the fiction of the Co-op Vitrine is projected is the familiar formal and autotelic production of modernism, but this is quickly interrupted by questions of the *reception* of form. On the one hand, the Co-op Vitrine incorporates the compositional strategies of seriality, repetition, diagonal and frontal layering, and circumnavigable space, all constituents of a modernist practice already evolved to its most advanced stages in postcubist and elementarist pictorial and sculptural practices such as suprematism and constructivism. At the same time, without sacrificing the formal rigor and self-referentiality of a thoroughly modern artform, Meyer introduces into this work an *iconic* potential which seeks to engage a wholly different audience in wholly different terms than those routinely associated with modernism, terms closer to the instrumentalized factographic and cinematographic researches of productivism and even dadaism than to the valorization of autonomy, abstraction, and hermetic withdrawal of high modernism.

For example, when in 1921, Raoul Hausmann declares, "Our art is already today film! At once event, sculpture, and image!"¹⁵ he defines a collective, mass-technologically structured form of object perception as well as a strategy of formal articulation. And when, in the same year, A. V. Babichev declares, "Art is an informed analysis of the concrete tasks which social life poses.... If art becomes public property it will organize the consciousness and psyche of the masses by organizing objects and ideas,"¹⁶ he invokes themes of organized production, consumption, and subjective engagement that are continuous with Meyer's concerns in the Co-op Vitrine. Such statements and the sorts of work to which they are attached belie a more general crisis of representational systems within the modernist paradigm than has been acknowledged in the standard architecture historical literature,¹⁷ a crisis involving nothing less than a changed psychic and cognitive relationship to objects.

In the mid-1920s there was a general recognition among the most politically committed artists that those artistic forms, procedures, and conditions of reception received from bourgeois society and its aesthetic institutions would have to be systematically dismantled and redefined in an effort to establish new conditions of simultaneous collective reception, and that those latter conditions would involve changed perceptual conventions for objects of everyday use. The productivist programs of of the Soviet avant-garde provide a standard against which to measure

¹⁵Raoul Hausmann, "PREsentismus gegen den Puffkeismus der Deutschen Seele," in *De Stijl* 4, no. 9 (September 1921), reprinted Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, ed. Karl Riha and Günter Kämpf (Giessen: Anabas-Verlag, 1980), 31

¹⁶A. V. Babichev, cited in Hubertus Gassner, "Analytical Sequences," in *Alexander Rodchenko*, ed. David Elliot (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1979), 110

¹⁷Benjamin Buchloh discusses this crisis in the context of the historiographic reception of the Russian avant-garde in his "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Fall 1984): 82-119.

many of these changes. But another illuminating comparison with Meyer's Co-op Vitrine comes in a remarkable essay by the painter Johannes Molzahn, "Economics of the Advertising Mechanism," published in Die Form in 1925-26. (Compare fig. 210.) In order to understand what I have called the psychic and cognitive nature of the perceived interrelations of systems of production, commodity products, and their reception, it is worth quoting the article at some length.

[J]ust as the natural forces of water, wind and fire can only be harnessed to industrial use by interposing some form of resistance to them (turbines, windmills and so on), to convert the forces into mechanical energy, in the same way the productive forces that we find in industrial production become expressive only when similar conditions are fulfilled and the production-psyche is successfully converted into acceptance by the consumer. The comparisons of the functions can be illustrated in parallel tables:

<i>Industry</i>		<i>Advertising</i>
Natural forces: water, fire etc.	=	production, materials
Converter: turbine, windmill	=	propaganda machinery
Effective power: mechanical energy	=	consumption, sales

As we have now set out the production-psyche of the natural forces, that which drives the production-machinery through a process of conversion and keeps it going, and appears in the Table as effective power, similarly we have found the converter in the propaganda-machinery, which drives the consumption mechanism and keeps that moving. We now have to find out the means employed in the propaganda-machinery, to find a converter serving the same purpose in our field as the turbine does in the field of industrial production. Our first problem will be to recognize the psyche of consumption, or acceptance, with its organs and functions, and to deduce from that the means of

affecting them. It is not difficult to perceive this acceptance-mechanism in the spirit of the people or its expression in the spirit of the age, which takes material form through an optical-acoustic appeal to the senses ... The propaganda of production must therefore rely primarily on optical functions. But propaganda is in essence information in graphic presentation; the question is, then, to determine which elements of graphic presentation to have the greatest optical capacity to make a lasting impression on the psyche.... We can demonstrate the conversion effect of the symbol presentation in yet another example. Let us take a magnifying glass and hold it between the sun and a piece of paper so that the paper is at the focal point of the lens, and catches fire. In thus creating fire we have converted the sun's energy into active energy. The conception of a symbol-effect is convincing if we show this same experiment to a primitive tribe; the impact would be absolutely shattering and express itself in wild flight from this "magic," which has so taken and impressed the whole psyche of the primitive man. The lens has become a symbol of the sun, the unknown function of the lens has engraved itself on the subconscious, a mystery. In this example we have established the principle that the industrial symbol has to construct if it is to produce its effect. The trade-mark has the function of the lens, it stands for the lens as the lens stood for the sun to the primitive people. At the focal point, which corresponds to the concentration-point of the industrial symbol, the same process of conversion has taken: the production-force becomes effective in the psyche of the consumer, perhaps in the manner indicated schematically [in the 'Fire-Psyche' diagram accompanying the text]. Thus the trade-mark is always the most elementary means, the link between *production and consumption*.¹⁸

¹⁸Johannes Molzahn, "Economics of the Advertising Mechanism," *Die Form* 1 (new series) (Berlin, 1925-26), 141-44; translation in *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939*, ed. Tim and Charlotte Benton (London: The Open University Press, 1975), 224-26

The emblematic product as the lens through which to see production: it is a suitable metaphor within which to read the Co-op Vitrine, and its appropriateness is confirmed in the reproduction of the Vitrine by Meyer as an illustration (along with "Kinoplat" and "Zeitungsprospekt") to his essay, "Die neue Welt," in a section significantly entitled "Die Propaganda" (fig. 211). Meyer writes,

The modern poster presents lettering and product or trademark conspicuously arranged. It is not a poster work of art but a piece of visual sensationalism. In the display window of today psychological capital is made of the tensions between modern materials with the aid of lighting. It is display window organization rather than window dressing. It appeals to the finely distinguishing sense of materials found in modern man and covers the gamut of its expressive power: fortissimo = tennis shoes to Havana cigarettes to scouring soap to nut chocolate! Mezzoforte = glass (as a bottle) to wood (as a packing case) to pasteboard (as a packing) to tin (as a can)! Pianissimo = silk pyjamas to cambric shirts to Valenciennes lace to "L'Origan de Coty"!¹⁹

Thus situated, the project not only operates to repudiate that more traditional and conventional view of representation — which is able to see such a work as the Co-op Vitrine only as sheer communication of a fixed external social condition or idea, as a crystallized isomorph of a world already finished — and to install an alternative signifying practice that foregrounds the procedures of interpretive framing and modes of address, but also vehiculates a new conception of subject/object relations which we will come to see as a neutralization or *obversion* of Simmel's conception introduced earlier, and which it must now be my task to articulate more fully.

¹⁹Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt," in *Das Werk* 7 (Bern, 1926): 205-24; trans. in Schnaidt

As I have already indicated, implicit in Simmel's conception of modernity is the absence of concrete and integrated experience (*Erfahrung*) and its displacement by a kind of psychologism — the absorption of the contradictory fragments of the world into the monadic armature of our individual inner experience (*Erlebnis*). "The unity or lack of unity of the object that we create affects, in a psychological-practical sense, the corresponding formation of our personality."²⁰ The persuasiveness of Meyer's Co-op work will best be felt not so much as a reversal of this theme as the identification of an alternative condition in which interiority is defeated, and our subjectivity as consumers is now dispersed outward across the exteriority of the fields of signs or aesthetic surfaces, what Walter Benjamin in the citation above called wish-images, which are the immediate result of collective modes of production, of which the individual subject, like the individual article of consumption, is a *decentered effect*, and to which bourgeois individualism, illusionism, and interiority cannot lay claim. Meyer provides his own summary of the transformatory potential of mass industrial and cultural techniques and channels of communication:

The standardization of our requirements is shown by: the bowler hat, bobbed hair, the tango, jazz, the Co-op product, the DIN standard size and Liebig's meat extract. The standardization of mental fare is illustrated by the crowds going to see Harold Lloyd, Douglas Fairbanks and Jackie Coogan. Grock and the three Fratellini weld the masses — irrespective of class and racial differences — into a community with a common fate. Trade union, co-operative, Ltd., Inc., cartel, trust and the League of Nations are the forms in which today's social conglomerations find expression, and the radio and the

²⁰ Loc. cit., note 9

rotary press are their media of communication. Co-operation rules the world. The community rules the individual.²¹

The Co-op Vitrine adheres to the formal strategies of the modernist avant-garde, as we have seen, even as it folds into itself those enunciative formations of industrialized production and mass consumption on which its representation is born, all of which produces a doubled circuit of signs. The doubling, I will argue, is an aesthetic resolution and imaginary projection of an as-yet-unattained, underlying condition of collective modes of production and reception, and should be seen as part of a general attempt by Meyer in his Co-op work to devise such aesthetic apparatuses as *quasi-material transmission systems* which operate to help *produce* a new, corresponding collective subjectivity. As Benjamin writes, "These images are wish-images, and in them the collective seeks both to sublimate and transfigure the incompleteness of the social product and the inadequacies in the social system of production."

And so now, to the compass of significations in the Vitrine developed so far must be added another register: the sign system organized by the Co-op Vitrine is class directed; or better, the advantages or limits upon the capacity to apprehend its signification are conferred by the class affiliations with a workers' collective consciousness, as opposed to bourgeois individualism. I hasten to add that this interpretation is not a matter of simply finding class signals added to the work, but rather of understanding how its *structuration* — its processes and context of formation

²¹Meyer, "Die neue Welt"

— inevitably delimits a domain of ideological effectivity, and gives specific visual form to certain cognitive and emotive materials of everyday life in much the same way as do propagandist forms of rhetoric.

Consider, as an example of the latter, the brief play "Der Traum" (fig. 213), by Hannes Meyer and Jean Bard, staged simply with a phonograph recording, life-sized puppets, and actors, in Ghent, Belgium, 1924, as part of the Internationale Ausstellung des Genossenschaftswesens und der sozialen Wohlfahrtspflege under the direction of Bernhard Jäggi. In the play a poor family appears in a "dreamlike apparition of the actual community." A scene of misery is described, with a mother and two children sleeping as a black spider descends, horrifying the mother and upsetting the children. Enter the father who pulls a sandwich from its wrapper. "Stillness and anticipation." The wrapper is a Co-op poster, which the father then places on the wall to the excitement of the family. The family returns to their sleep and the dream commences: Co-op packages descend, containing food and products of daily use. "The picture of the future advances, gigantic [*riesengross*]." An apparition of a hand with refund and reimbursement (*Rückvergütung*), laden with money advances then dissolves. The dream ends.²²

Behind this example of class-specific theatrical propaganda, and behind all of Meyer's Co-op work, lies the sedimented experiences of Siedlung Freidorf, the community facility built by Meyer between 1919 and 1924 for the Swiss Co-operative Union, under the direction of Bernhard Jäggi and Henry Faucherre, professor of political economy at the University of Zurich, along with Karl Mundig, who coined the

²²Hannes Meyer, "Das Theater Co-op," Das Werk 11 (Bern, 1924): 329-332

name "Freidorf", and Rudolf Kündig.²³ The promoters of Freidorf situated their patronage, in turn, relative to two figures directly related to the international and Helvetic cooperative movements, Heinrich Pestalozzi and Heinrich Zschokke. Faucherre cited the eighteenth-century educational reformer Pestalozzi as the veritable source of the Freidorf "adventure."²⁴ In his novel Leonard and Gertrude (1781), Pestalozzi pays particular attention to collective self-help and self-determination, as well as to family education and the key role of the mother, whose common sense, sound judgment, and liberating suppleness contrast to patriarchal, authoritarian strength, and influence first her family, then her village, and finally the state. For Faucherre, Pestalozzi was the initiator of the modern cooperative movements, and the principle influence on later planners like Robert Owen, who had visited Pestalozzi in Switzerland. On the other hand, Zschokke's The Goldminer's Village (1817) — which narrated the systematic transformation of a village toward collectivity and described in detail the benefits for all, emphasizing that different forms of behavior are reflections of

²³And behind Freidorf lay his work on housing projects in Essen in Krupp's welfare office, his study of town planning in Berlin, and of the English cooperative, syndicalist, and garden city movements. For a brief biography of Meyer, see Schnaidt, Hannes Meyer. The best commentary on the Siedlung Freidorf is Jacques Gubler, Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975). The original documentation and commentaries on the project are in Johann Friedrich Schär, Henri Faucherre, and Hannes Meyer, Die Siedlung Freidorf (Basel: Buchhandlung VSK, 1921); a second enlarged edition, which appeared in 1943 as 25 Jahre Siedlungsgenossenschaft Freidorf; and also Hannes Meyer, "Die Siedlung Freidorf," in Das Werk 12, no. 2 (1925): 40-51.

²⁴Henri Faucherre, "Vom inneren Aufbau der Siedlungsgenossenschaft Freidorf," in 25 Jahre Siedlungsgenossenschaft Freidorf. Pestalozzi's pedagogy involved a rejection of catechesis and teaching based on religious aims and memorization, in favor of studies based on observation, discovery, and experimentation designed to enhance and guide the development of the natural instincts and capacities of the growing child.

tensions between a humanizing possibility and specific social situations — was, for its founders, nothing less than a prototype of Meyer's Siedlung.²⁵

In the socio-political context around the year 1919, the Freidorf experiment was understood to have a certain revolutionary and transformatory dimension which was not lost on Meyer.²⁶ Meyer himself was a member of the cooperative and a resident of Freidorf from 1921 to 1926, as well as the chief of its building commission. In the latter capacity he designed not only the buildings (about which more later), but also the logo for the cooperative — which appears, for example, on the coupons used in place of Swiss Marks for exchange of everyday goods — as well as the packages and window displays of the standard products of the *magasin d'alimentation*, at which all members of the cooperative were obliged to shop. It is from these early experiences in the specific economic situation and way of life in the workers' cooperative that the Co-op Vitrine derives.

His Co-op theater and Freidorf experience point to Meyer's concern for worker's lives, perhaps, but how can we theorize the claim that the Co-op Vitrine is informed by class considerations? In History and Class Consciousness,²⁷ Georg Lukács develops a theory of reification as a negative and critical concept structurally related to class, which subtends the earlier studies of Simmel and the analyses of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and others that followed, and provides a potential

²⁵Faucherre, "Siedlungsgenossenschaft Freidorf"

²⁶Jacques Gubler, Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse, 87. Gubler points out that part of the reason for the promotional efforts of the founders was, indeed, to make the idea of Freidorf palatable to the larger public, and, thereby, to make the Siedlung possible.

²⁷Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971 [orig. German 1968])

framework for an understanding of Meyer's project. Unlike the concept of alienation — which pertains to activity, and in particular to the progressive dissociation of the activity of workers from their labor, their products, their fellow workers, and ultimately from their entire life experience — reification is, for Lukács, a process that affects our *cognitive* relationship with the social totality by structuring our fundamental relationship to objects in the world and categories through which we conceive all other things.²⁸ The distortions of reified bourgeois society consist of the separations and "antinomies" of subjective experience and objective history, private self and public life, isolated empirical details and overarching abstract principles, and so forth; and its cognitive limits are signaled by its incapacity to come to terms with the category of *totality*, with the unity of subject and object. Consequently, the tendency of the middle-class is to understand external objects in a static and contemplative mode — not in terms of production or use, origin or purpose, but rather through a myopic and motionless gaze in a suspended moment of time. For the bourgeois, an object is above all a commodity — a fixed, given, immediate thing whose cause is wholly secondary to its consumption — and this static relationship to objects is, of course, but a "reflection" of the life experience of the bourgeois in the the socio-economic realm. For though he may gaze at the apparent elements of his environment and social relations within capitalism, the bourgeois is not aware of this reality as a product of historical forces, and as therefore open to change. Bourgeois ideology, then, is a kind of inertness, a set of strategic lapses and omissions of parts of the raw material which preclude the possibility that certain questions can even arise.

²⁸Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 160 ff.

Though the proletarian life world is also structured by reification, the worker's perception of that reality is significantly different from that of the bourgeois. For the worker knows the finished product as a moment in the process of production itself — a process involving the interrelationship of tools and procedures, situation and purpose, acts and consequences — and it is this knowledge which produces in proletarian thought the capacity for dissolving the antinomies and inertness inherent in bourgeois epistemology. For inasmuch as reality is thought as a construction and a process, it is thought historically and as containing within its present moment the possibility of radical transformation. It is thus proletarian thought that, for Lukács, penetrates the fetishized immediacy of bourgeois reality to establish itself as the privileged mode of knowledge whereby the world is comprehensible as a "totality," as a process open to change through that union of consciousness and activity which is *praxis*.²⁹

What is important for us here is the notion that it is precisely the self-consciousness of an intolerable position within a certain mode of production — which is a consciousness of one's self as a member of a *class* in a society that is a historical *construction* — which produces in proletarian thought the capability of rethinking subject/object relations from a vantagepoint of concrete totality. Fredric Jameson has put the point succinctly:

[T]he outside world, as the result of human labor, considered now not as nature but as history, is of the same substance as the subjectivity of the worker himself: the subjectivity of men can now be seen as the product of the same

²⁹Lukács's analysis, in the context of architecture, would thus privilege the workers' life experience and *craft* labor, in contrast to Meyer's empirico-critical praise of technology.

social forces that create commodities and ultimately the entire reality of the world in which men live.³⁰

What is more, Lukács finds in the artistic production of realism — or more specifically the realist novel, where the characters and their interactions emerge as concrete particulars within the articulated context of a changing social whole — a narration of the social totality which modernist art, in its abstraction, cannot achieve. Realism makes the connections between the actual workings of a society and its appearances. And so, even though the category of totality remains absent from modern life, it can nevertheless be reasserted on the representational plane of artistic form.

I invoke Lukács's theory of class, reification, and realism so specifically here not because I believe that it is entirely adequate or unproblematic — indeed, Lukács's endorsement of realism is explicitly at odds with the sort of description I have been making of Meyer's work — but rather because it yields a general way to relate artistic form to the structure of the psychic subject as the latter is differently constructed according to its position in specific modes of production. It is this interactive relation of form, subjectivity, and mode of production, in an openly political art, that is operative in the Co-op Vitrine. And I would suggest that Co-op form has as much content, albeit more rudimentary and limited in its articulation, as the older realisms with which Lukács is concerned. In its investigations of commodity sign production and reception, its stress on the analogous process-like character of artistic signifying practice, both as production and reception, and its positing of a continuum in the life of

³⁰Jameson, 188

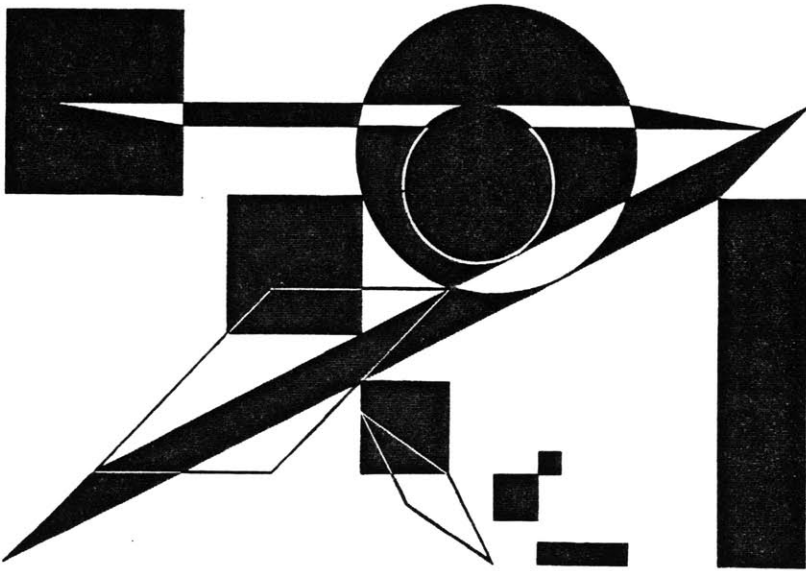
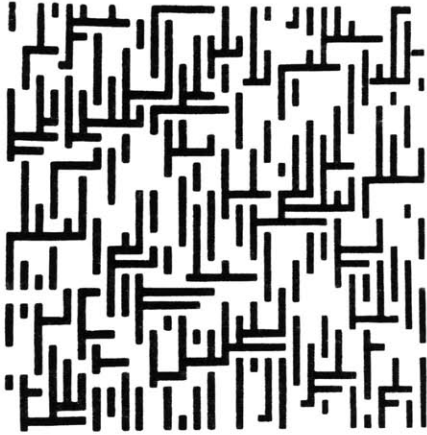
the commodity product from the factory to the shop window, Meyer's Co-op form attempts to articulate mechanisms by which to transcend the most fundamental antinomies of modern existence: those between public and private, work and thought, the political and the artistic, the sociological and the psychological, the collective and the individual, between my being-for-myself and my being-for-others, in short, between object and subject. And if Meyer's is now an aesthetic that avails itself of the formative principles of mechanized reproduction as a privileged, if fragmentary, form of modern reality rather than of the strategies of realist narrative, as in Lukács, and if it is repetition, seriality, banality, and the like which become the valid conceptualization of the totality of our experience of modern society, it is not because Co-op form betrays a legitimization of the existing order, but rather because it identifies the *transformatory potential* of that order out of which an authentic collective life and a single international culture of the future might be developed. We are reminded again of Benjamin's citation: "In the dream in which, before the eyes of each epoch, that which is to follow appears in images, the latter appears wedded to elements from prehistory, that is, of a classless society."

A curious reversal thus takes place: it is henceforth precisely the mechanization, massification, and planification of everyday life — the very forces of reification recognized by Simmel and Lukács — and their subjective consequences, that are *recommended* as the raw material of a critical aesthetic practice. While Simmel and Lukács correctly identify reification as the precondition for the emergence of modernism, they overlook the possibility of the different resolution achieved by Meyer: the *utopian vocation of the reified material*, ideologically reconfigured or re-presented,

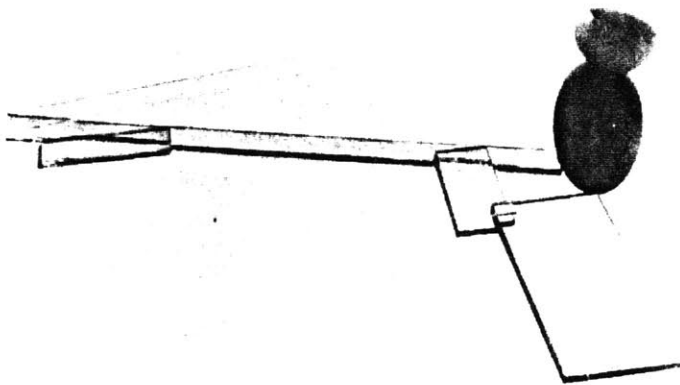
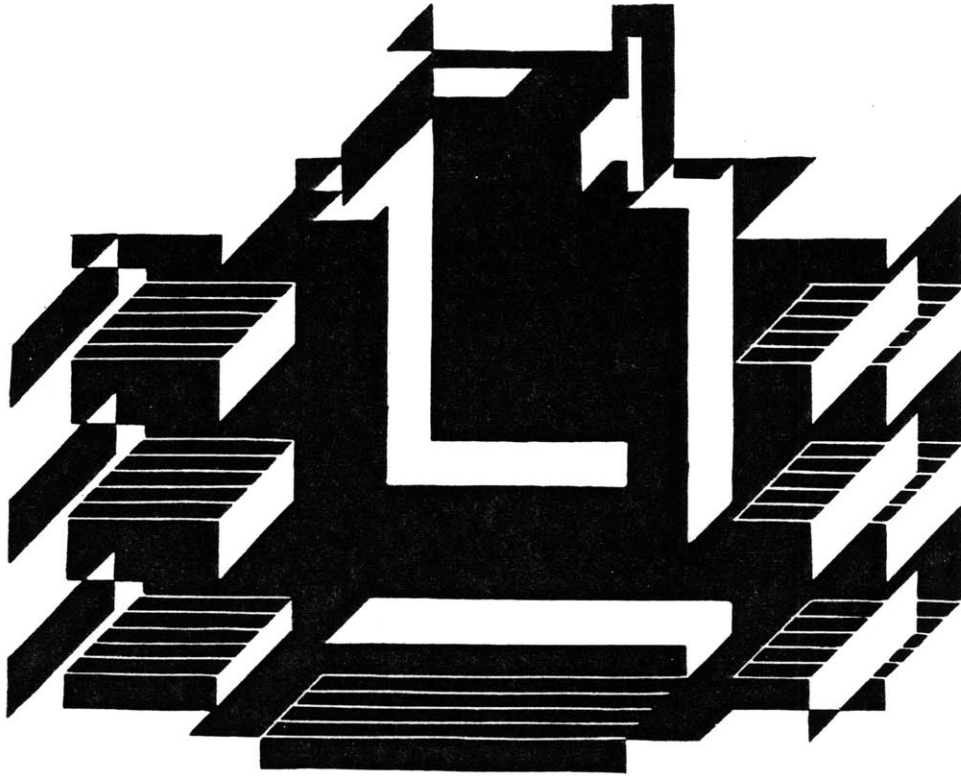
Co-op Vitrine and the Representation of Mass Production and Consumption

to promote at least a symbolic experience of collective life. Reification and modernism are structurally related, but their conjunction must now be thought not in terms of representing the redeemed humanist subject or its threatened psychological precincts, but by means of the very different representational categories of progaganda, dispersion, and reproduction, organized around the collective subject of the posthumanist future.

We have concentrated thus far on the Co-op Vitrine and the representation of mass production and collective reception. Yet, Co-op form sends critical analysis out in so many different directions that it is impossible to focus on a primary work or message. We must now consider other instances of Meyer's attempt to provide transmission systems with which to articulate the experience of cooperative life.

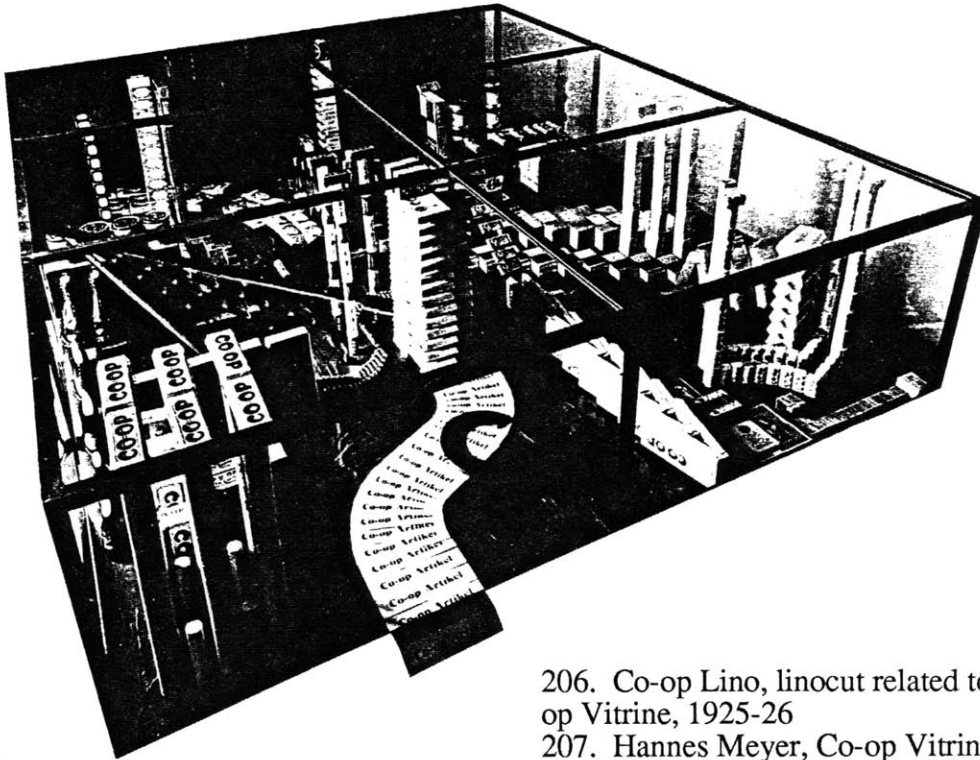


201. Hannes Meyer, CO-OP linocut (horizontal/vertical construction), 1925-26
202 (bottom). CO-OP linocut (graphic construction I), 1925-26
203. Study — 2 graphics on glass plates overlaid, 1926



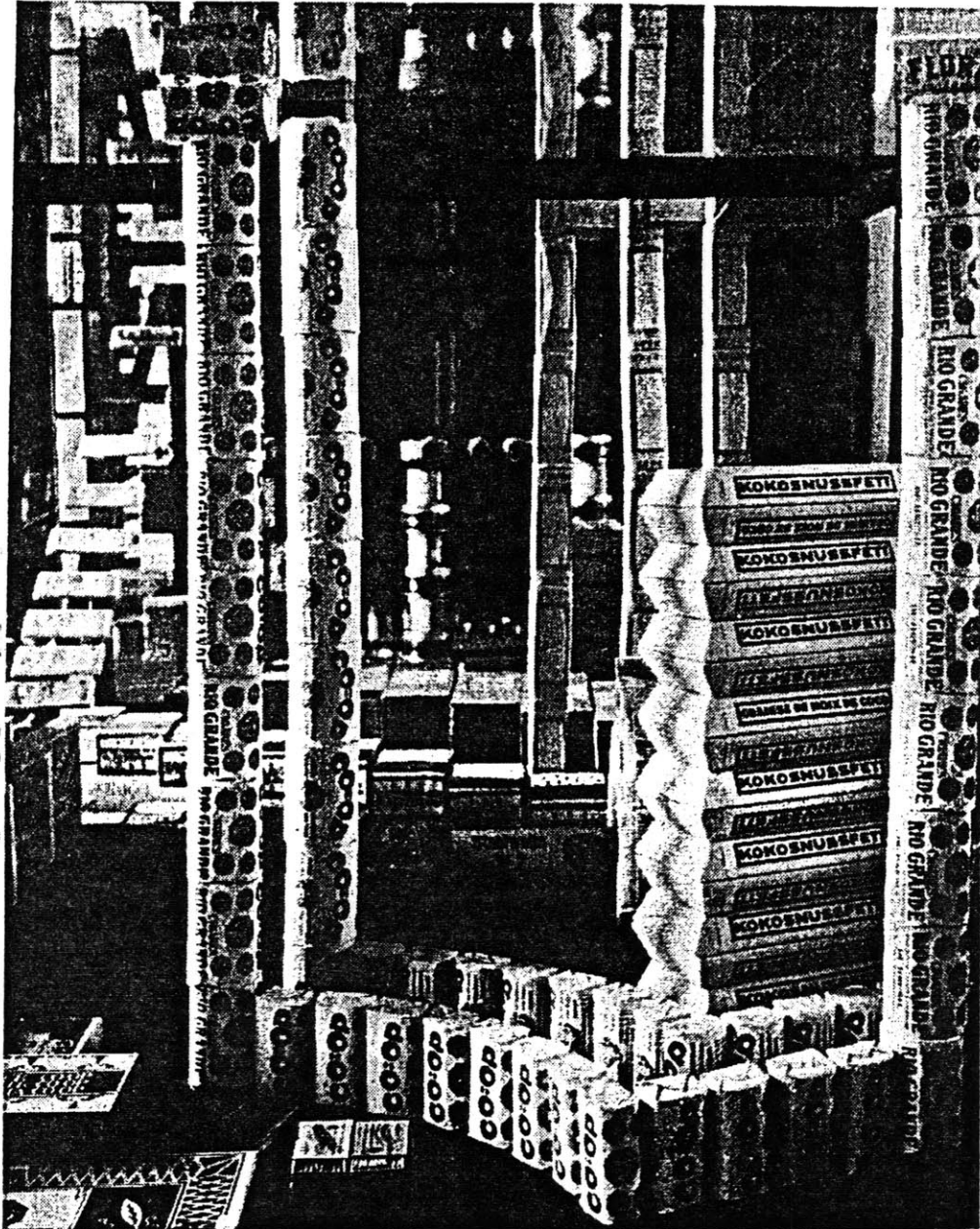
204. Abstract architecture II, 1925-26
205. CO-OP Construction 1926/4, 1926

Co-op Vitrine and the Representation of Mass Production and Consumption



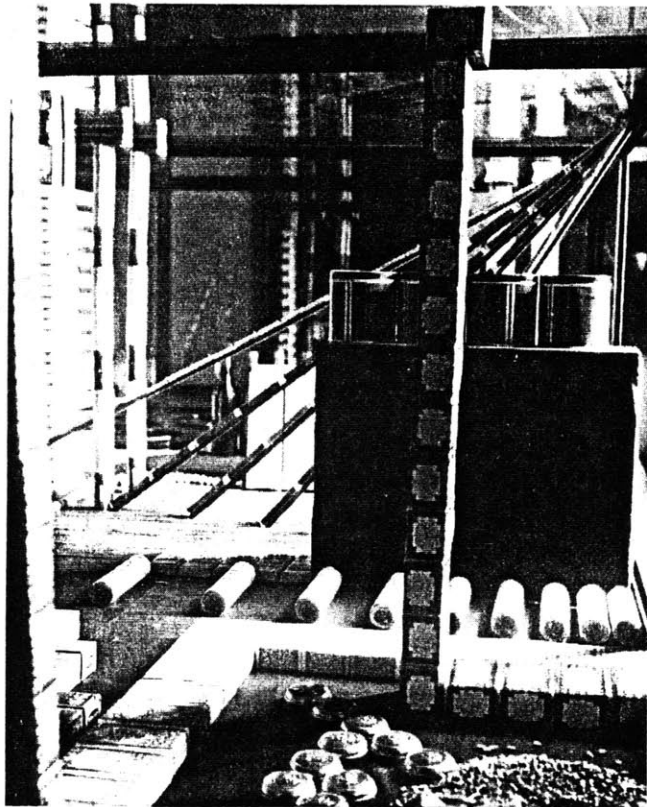
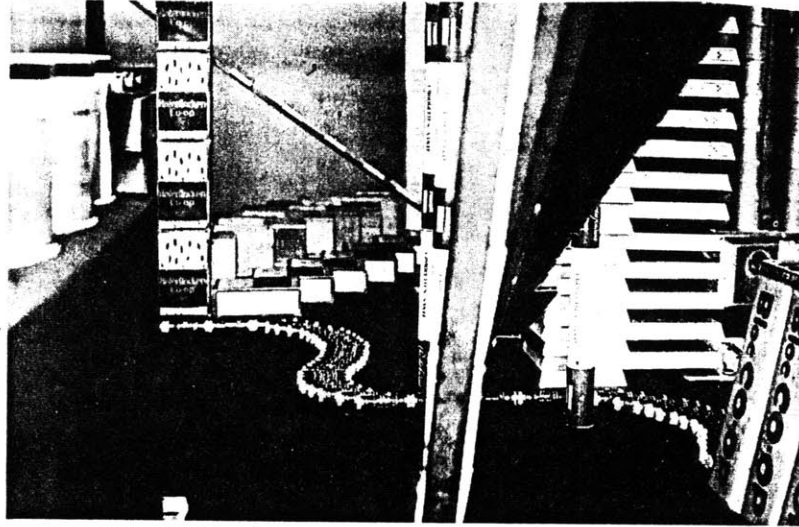
206. Co-op Lino, linocut related to the Co-op Vitrine, 1925-26

207. Hannes Meyer, Co-op Vitrine with Co-op products, exhibited in Gent and Basel, 1925



208. Co-op Vitrine, detail

Co-op Vitrine and the Representation of Mass Production and Consumption



209. Co-op Vitrine, details

Co-op Vitrine and the Representation of Mass Production and Consumption

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DIE REKLAME VON LAJOS KASSAK

Nicht nur die Schmücker der Ästhetik, auch wissenschaftliche Soziologen und Volkswirtschaftler behandeln die Reklame mit geringe schätzung. Der Ästhetiker sieht darin eine primitive Unverständlichkeit, der Soziologe eine Destruktion des Handels und der demokratischen Lebensformen im allgemeinen. Es ist nicht so derlich schwer, diesen zwei Einwendungen zuwider zu setzen entgegenzuhalten:

I. Das Schöne an sich ist eine leere Fiktion, was Schönheit eine bloss sekundäre Erscheinung ist und lediglich als Folge, als Eigenschaft eines Dinges auftritt. Ist ein Ding an sich vollendet, zweckdienlich, so ist es unbedeutend, auch schön. Die Schönheit als Eigenschaft ist ein notwendiges Attribut jeder organischen und organisierter Einheit. Die Reklame als menschliches Produkt kann sowohl schön als hässlich sein, ihre Geltungserhöhung aus ästhetischen Gründen ist daher keine kritische Stellungnahme, sondern unweigerlich und unzweifelhaft eine Schmückerei.

II. Die gute Reklame ist gesellschaftlich nicht bedingt. Sie ist ein Produkt des Handels, an der Hand ist eine Folge der erhöhten Lebensansprüche des Menschen. Nicht, ist leichter, als die heutige Reklame Europas als selbstbildungs-schmacklos und antisozial zu verdammen. Sie anders jedoch verhält es sich mit dem heutigen auf freier Konkurrenz beruhenden Kapitalismus. Etwas folgt nun nicht die endgültige Vergabe des Handels, sondern die Notwendigkeit, die eine sonderbare Grundlage zu geben. Zweifellos entfaltet Russland heute eine weitaus umfassendere kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Propaganda, als unter dem Zarenismus. Es hat die Plakate nicht abgeschafft, sondern von egoistischen Privatinteressen befreit und in den Dienst der Gemeinschaft gestellt. Sie wurde dadurch nicht nur im materialistischen Sinne, sondern auch im ethischen neu geboren.

Die russische Reklame hat sich, vielfach in

Übereinstimmung mit der amerikanischen, von der individuellen Graphik entfernt und von einem unregelmäßigen Charakter, sie wurde nicht ästhetisch, demonstrativ.

In diesem Sinne ist die gute Reklame ein sozialer Faktor unseres Lebens und die Erscheinungsform nicht schön oder hässlich, sondern wirksam oder unwirksam zu nennen. Ihre Ausdrucksmittel zwar sind, wie diejenigen der anderen Künste, Farbe, Ton und Form, aber unterscheidet sie sich ihrem Wesen nach und vom Kunstgewerbe. Ein gelungenes Plakat kann sich zum Erlebnis werden, ein mißlungenes, wenn es ein Bild, kann indes unmöglich den Hunger nach Neuheit und Sensation erwecken. Das Publikum gemisst in der Grundbedeutung den passiven Aktivismus der europäischen Kunst, vor der Reklame, und das was es nicht das Nebeneinander, sondern der Kampf der Plakate untereinander.

Die gute Reklame, die mehr optisch als durch Worte, Text, Prospekt, die in die Nacht hinaus in die Luft leuchtend oder akustisch als schriller, immer wieder, Glockensignale, sich trifft, ist mit der Plötzlichkeit des Überraschenden auf den Plan. Hinter ihr steht die Legion der auf den Markt gelangenden Waren. Sie ist nicht die Verkünderin eines ausserhalb ihrer Befehlsbereiches, sondern der zwischen Erzeugung und Verbrauch stehende demonstrative Kraftfeld. Die Grundelemente der guten Reklame sind Soziologie und Psychologie.

Stimmungsmomente und illustrative Bilder, die widersprechen dem Wesen der Reklame, bringen es um die Promptheit der Wirkung und um die übertragende Suggestion. Die gute Reklame ist nicht analytisch und definierend, ist synthetisch.

Einheit von Zeit, Inhalt und Stoff. Die elementare Einfachheit und Reinheit führt zum Strassenzug stillschweigend und in ein Warenhaus treten, das uns vor einer Mauer nicht mit dem vom Hausnamen bekannt war, die es ist.

DIE REKLAME



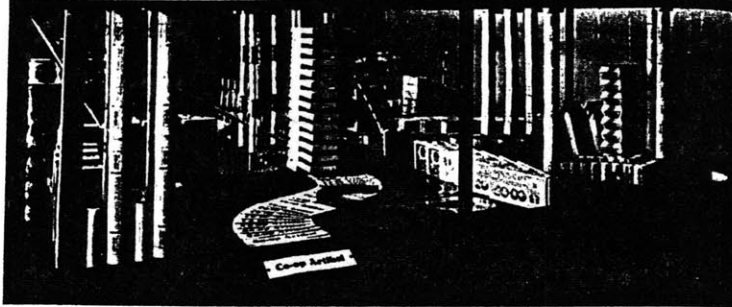
L. KASSAK



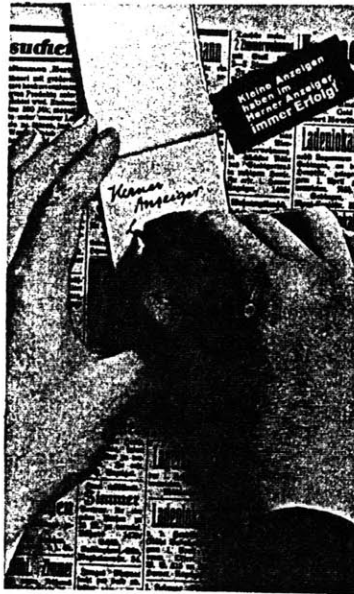
O. BALMNER AMSTERDAM

210. Spread entitled "Die Reklame" from Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt," Das Werk 7 (Bern, 1926)

DIE PROPAGANDA



HANNES MEYER, BASEL
Die Vitrine Co-op. 1925 / Phot. Th. Hoffmann, Basel



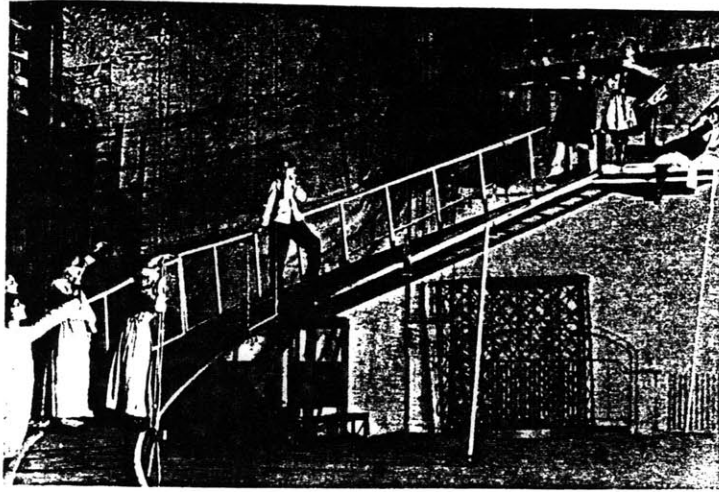
M. BURCHARTZ & J. CANIS, BOCHUM
Zeitungsprospekt, 1926



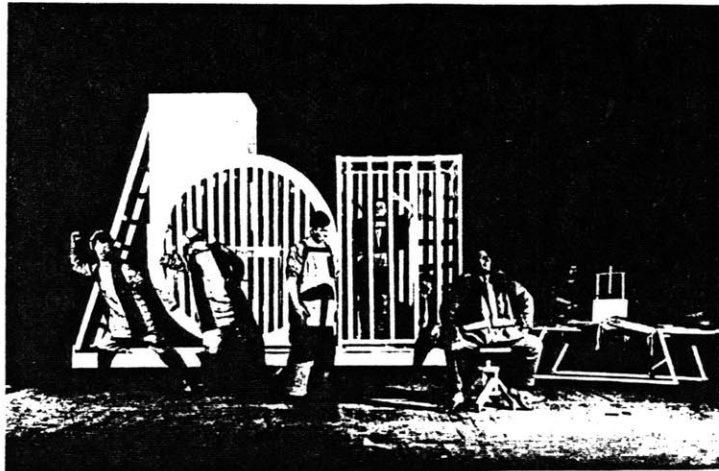
KINOPLAKAT

211. Spread entitled "Die Propaganda" from "Die neue Welt" showing the Co-op Vitrine, Zeitungsprospekt, and Kinoplat

DIE BÜHNE



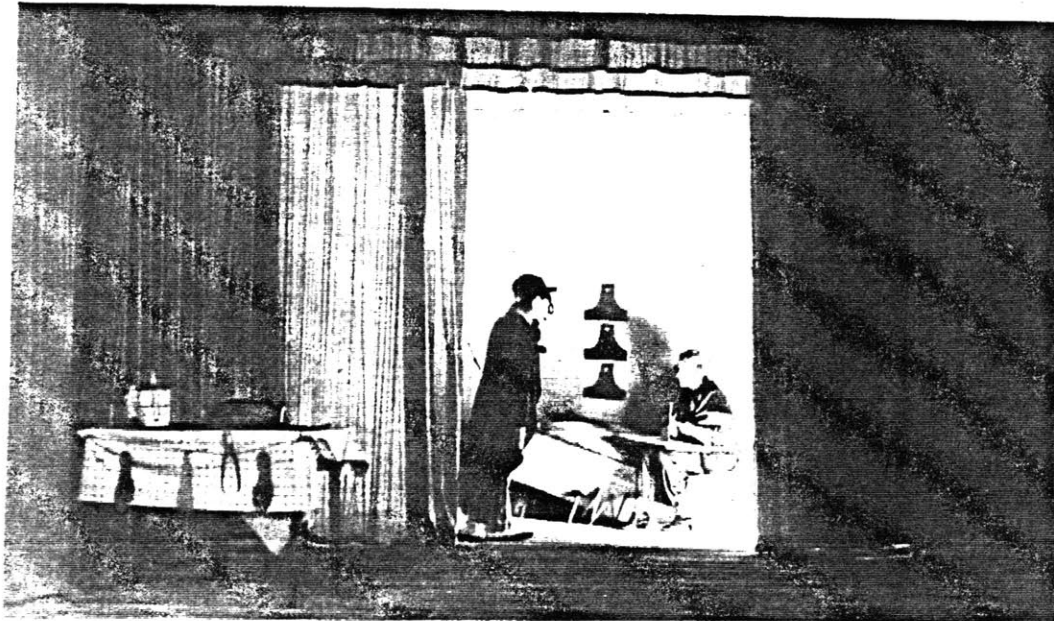
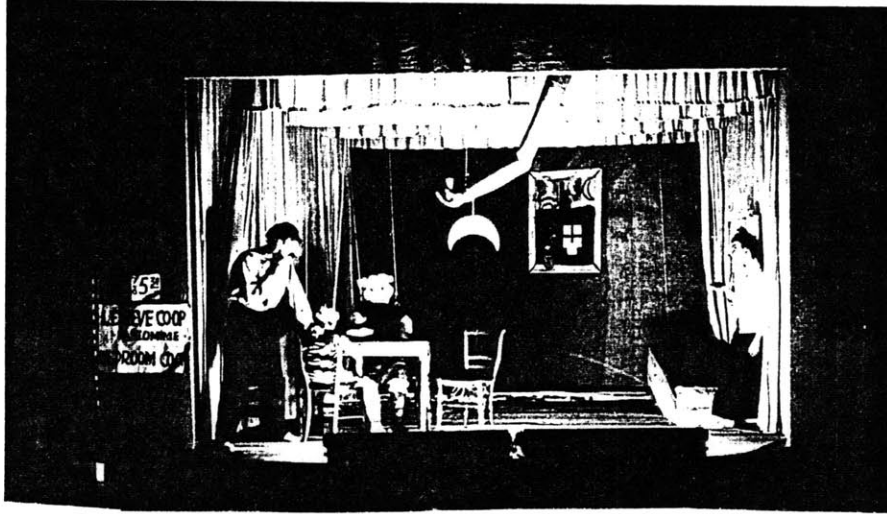
THEATER MEIERHOLD, MOSKAU
Der Wald von Ostrowsky / aus der Zeitschrift *Das neue Russland* (Berlin-Pankow)



THEATER MEIERHOLD, MOSKAU
Die Moskauer Zeit / aus der Zeitschrift *Das neue Russland* (Berlin-Pankow)

211

212. Page entitled "Die Bühne" from "Die neue Welt" showing scenes from Meyerhold's theater, Moscow



213. Scene from the play "Der Traum" from Hannes Meyer, "Die Siedlung Freidorf," Das Werk 12, no. 2 (1925)

214. Scene from the play "Die Co-op Arbeit"

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer

In his essays "Fashion" and "The Problem of Style," as well as The Philosophy of Money,³¹ Georg Simmel analyzes the phenomena of fashion and style as the manifest effects of a never resolved tension between attempts at individual differentiation and the overwhelming absorption of individuals into a homogenizing social structure. On the one hand, the adherence to the homogeneity of a dominant fashion bestows upon the individual a certain stability and supra-individuality that counters the fragmentation and abstraction of commodity fetishism. On the other hand, fashion is a means of expressing and preserving some semblance of inner freedom, of reasserting one's absent individuality in the face of "the superiority, autonomy, and indifference of the cosmos."³²

The consecutive shifts of fashion over time and the plurality of styles at the present are related respectively as diachronic and synchronic structures of differentiation. The rate of changes in fashion are indications of the languishing of cultural energies:

³¹Georg Simmel, "Die Mode," in Simmel, Philosophische Kultur (Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt, 1911), 31-64; translated as "Fashion," in American Journal of Sociology 62 (May 1957) and reprinted in Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 294-323; page references are to original. "Das Problem des Stiles," Dekorative Kunst 11, no. 7 (1908): 307-16. Philosophie des Geldes (Leipzig: Duncker und Humbolt, 1900); translated as The Philosophy of Money, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); page references are to the English translation.

³²Simmel, "Die Mode," 57

Changes in fashion indicate the amount of deadening of nervous excitement; the more nervous an epoch is, the more rapidly will its fashions change, because the need for the attraction of differentiation, one of the essential agents of fashion, goes hand in hand with the languishing of nervous energies.³³

Similarly, the proliferation of styles, the "disloyalty" to any one style, is a consequence of the individual's overstimulation, indifference, and restlessness:

The lack of something definite at the center of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations and external activities. Thus it is that we become entangled in the instability and helplessness that manifests itself as the tumult of the metropolis, as the mania for travelling, as the wild pursuit of competition and as the typically modern disloyalty with regard to taste, style, opinions and personal relationships.³⁴

Given the objective autonomy of fashion and style, we as individuals are now confronted with "these forms on the one side, and our subjectivity on the other."

Modern man is so surrounded by nothing but impersonal objects that he becomes more and more conditioned into accepting the idea of an anti-individualistic social order — though, of course, he may also oppose it. Cultural objects increasingly evolve into an interconnected enclosed world that has increasingly fewer points at which the subjective soul can interpose its will and feelings. And this trend is supported by a certain autonomous mobility on the part of objects.... Both material and intellectual objects today move

³³Ibid., 39

³⁴Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 484

independently, without personal representatives or transport. Objects and people have become separated from one another.³⁵

Style thus emerges for Simmel as a paradoxical form of protective distance between subject and object. Style is a sublimation of subjective contradictions — the tension between individualism and socialism — and of the oppressive externalities of modern life that threatens the subject's constitution. Style is a veil, however illusory, behind which the fragmented subject can escape the nervous intensity (*Nervenleben*) of modernity.

It is no surprise, then, that stylization is most intensified in the specialized spatial realm of the bourgeois interior and its household objects, the realm where an autonomous individualism is clung to most desperately and symbolized most completely. "The Problem of Style" was written after the time when artists and architects had devised the notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* — a total stylization and imaginary projection of authorial integrity, whose very conceptualization is possible only when the apparatus of style has first been isolated and developed into an independent sign system. This autonomization of style then enables its various constitutive forms (from tableware and chairs, to construction details, to entire city scenes) to carry more elaborate symbolic meanings. Gottfried Semper, Alois Riegl, and others had already argued that utilitarian objects and the handling of their different materials and labors give us an insight into the culture of a period. But as long as the notion of style is seen as the simple product or epiphenomenon of a particular social

³⁵Ibid., 460

life, its symbolic extension is limited by our description of that social life. Only the autonomization and specialization of style as enunciated by Simmel makes possible the *desire* for a modern style *yet to be invented*, and the projection of that desire onto objects in the world.

The libidinal energy of the *Jugendstil* stylizations is striking. And it is in this context of desire and the increasingly rarefied researches into style that the figure of Adolf Loos appears. The Loosian "solution" to the desperate desire to find a modern style, his answer to all the overly-anxious, overly-eroticized *Jugendstil* fantasies of inventing a total architectural language in adequation of the emergent differentiations of bourgeois society, is a kind of *negation of the negation* of that desire — a critical procedure whereby the desired language of differentiation, the style, is magically revealed by way of its very renunciation.

[D]o we need 'artists of applied arts'? No. All the industries that have succeeded to the present in staving off this superfluous element from their work have reached their highest level. Only the products of those industries really represent the style of our time. They so fully express the style of our time that we — and this is the only valid criterion of judgment — do not in fact even notice that we have a style.... What we need is a *civilization of carpenters*. If the artist of the applied arts would only go back to painting pictures or take to sweeping the streets, we would have it.³⁶

For Loos, as concerns buildings and objects of everyday use, the dreams and fantasies of design must confront the reality principle of the division of labor — the

³⁶Adolf Loos, "Die Überflüssigen" (1908), in Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften* (Vienna-Munich, 1962)

superego of capitalist society, and the differentiated cultural field of the present which it sponsors. Indeed, it seems that the production of Loos's entire ideology of a *Sachlichkeit* imposed through social utility — his Anglo-Saxon empiricism and fascination with American engineering, his attention to everyday concerns such as plumbing, underwear, and shoes, the famous effacements and renunciations of formal pretensions — is aimed at providing something like a censoring device for the desiring, designing subject. It is this reality principle that is the means of canceling the superfluous decoration and ornamental excesses that do actual cultural harm. As Theodor Adorno writes,

Pleasure appears, according to the bourgeois work ethic, as wasted energy. Loos's formulation makes clear how much as an early cultural critic he was fundamentally attached to that order whose manifestations he chastised wherever they failed to follow their own principles: "Ornament is wasted work energy and thereby wasted health. It has always been so. But today it also means wasted material, and both mean wasted capital." [Loos] Two irreconcilable motifs coincide in this statement: economy, for where else, if not in the norms of profitability, is it stated that nothing should be wasted; and the dream of the totally technological world, free from the shame of work. The second motif points beyond the commercial world. For Loos it takes the form of the realization that the widely lamented impotency to create ornament and the so-called extinction of stylizing energy... imply an advance in the arts.³⁷

³⁷Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today," *Oppositions* 17 (Summer 1979 [1965]): 35

At the same time, the desired differentiations sought superfluously by "artists of applied arts" are already given by the various labors associated with different uses and held separate within an articulate cultural field.

The work of art is brought into the world without there being any need for it. The house on the other hand satisfies a need.... The work of art is revolutionary, the house is conservative.... So the house should have nothing to do with art, and architecture should not be numbered among the arts? Exactly so. Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. The rest, everything which serves an end, should be excluded from the realm of art.³⁸

A certain amount of unpleasure must be accepted in order to comply with cultural and social needs, and moreover, this demands the maintenance of certain boundaries. As Karl Kraus put it,

Adolf Loos and I, he in facts and I in words, have done nothing but show that there is a difference between the urn and the chamber-pot and that culture plays itself out on this difference. The others, however, the defenders of positive knowledge, can be divided into two groups: those who take the urn for a chamber-pot and those who mistake a chamber-pot for an urn.³⁹

And then, too, there is a differentiation and autonomy at the level of languages of material.

³⁸Loos, "Architektur" (1910), in *Sämtliche Schriften*

³⁹Karl Kraus, in *Adolf Loos. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 1930), 27

Every material possesses a formal language which belongs to it alone and no other material can take on the forms proper to another.... No material permits any intrusion on its own repertoire of forms.⁴⁰

This principle of *Materialgerechtigkeit* is also based on the division of labor. It is the insistence on divisions, boundaries, and plays of difference based on wholly *present* distinctions of labor, use, and materials which produces the radical formal discontinuities in the commercial building on the Michaelerplatz, holds the life of the interior of the private houses separate from the public sphere of the metropolis, and further differentiates the private space of the bourgeois family into distinct zones of habitation and correlated furnishings. Loos's *Raumplan* is a continuous spatial sequence, but the rooms it comprises are discreetly related to the specific life habits of their occupants — the men's smoking room and the leather sofa (fig. 216), the *Zimmer der Dame* with its raised seating occupying the center of the house (fig. 217),⁴¹ the dining room where the drama of the family's social life is staged (fig. 220), Lina Loos's bedroom (fig. 219),⁴² Josephine Baker's swimming pool. Similarly, the labors involved in the production of the co-existing Egyptian stool, the modern bench with its Liberty fabric, the ceiling beams and the fireplace sitting nook, the Kokoschka paintings on the mantel with nineteenth century clocks and lamps (fig. 221), are all radically different, but their value is equal in the thoroughgoing relativity of a

⁴⁰Loos, "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung" (1898), in *Sämtliche Schriften*

⁴¹For a discussion see Beatriz Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle: the architectural production of the modern subject," MS., S.O.M. Foundation, Chicago, 1988

⁴²A characteristically laconic comment by Loos reads, "Adolf Loos, my wife's bedroom, white walls, white curtains, white Angora sheepskin." Cited in Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 102.

Sachlichkeit based on what Adorno called "a utopia of concretely fulfilled presence, no longer in need of symbols."⁴³ They attest to what Stanford Anderson has termed Loos's "critical presentism,"⁴⁴ and constitute a critique of the pompous bourgeois interior and, simultaneously, an acceptance of what adequately functions, physically and psychologically, regardless of its style.

It is in Loos's "critical presentism" — what I take to be his reconciliation of bourgeois commercial activity, aristocratic formal traditions, and present technology, his formalization of bourgeois schizophrenia, his acceptance of the destiny of the capitalist mode of production, and his radical defense of individual private life — that we detect the same "strange interplay between reactionary theory and revolutionary practice" that Walter Benjamin identified in Karl Kraus.

Indeed, to secure private life against morality and concepts in a society that perpetrates the political radioscopy of sexuality and family, of economic and physical existence, in a society that is in the process of building houses with glass walls, and patios extending far into the drawing rooms that are no longer drawing rooms — such a watchword would be the most reactionary of all were not the private life that Kraus had made it his business to defend precisely that which, unlike the bourgeois form, is in strict accordance with this social upheaval; in other words, *the private life that is dismantling itself*....⁴⁵

⁴³Adorno, "Functionalism Today," 35

⁴⁴Stanford Anderson, in courses at MIT. See his "Critical Conventionalism in Architecture," a lecture of 1982 published in *Assemblage* 1 (October 1986), esp. pp. 13-16.

⁴⁵Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," in Benjamin, *Reflections* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 [orig. German, 1955]), 247; emphasis added

And if, on the one hand, Loos's practice, with its stress on the use-value of objects as a criterion of their modernity, may be read as a critique of the autonomization and specialization of style mentioned above — that is, the conceptualization of style or formal language as a thing-in-itself — nevertheless, his insistence on the insuperable partitions between languages of form is continuous with the contemporaneous structural processes of reification, by which human relations and social forms are systematically broken up into their individual components and abstracted from concrete experience. What is interesting in the present context is that, as with the Co-op work of Meyer, reification becomes the historical concept by which the emergence of Loos's different version of the posthumanist subject can be understood. The dissolution of the older organic and seamless social fabric, its displacement by the now universally commodified labor power of highly differentiated individuals (from plumbers to shoe makers to Kokoschkas and Schönbergs), and the confrontation of these individual labors within the matrix of equivalencies of metropolitan life, allow Loos to hypothesize a rich and differentiated subjectivity. Yet, unlike the case of Meyer, this securing of subjective differentiations is achieved only within boundaries of existing antagonisms, identified by Simmel, between public and private, society and the individual, all of which Loos's schizophrenic subject replicates or reproduces at the level of architectural theory.

Simmel's account of style and Loos's denunciation of it thus share a referent in the *Nervenleben* of the monadic metropolitan protagonist. However, what Simmel theorized in historical anxiety as the hyper-sensitivity and fetishization of the mind, Loos cynically asserts as the ideal consciousness of the modern individual. For

Simmel, as we have seen, style is the buffer between the subject, its raw nerves exposed, and the world.

Here, the distance that art already places between ourselves and the objects is extended yet a stage further, in that the notions that form the content of the ultimately stimulating psychic experience no longer have a visible counterpart in the work of art itself, but are only provoked by perceptions of quite a different kind. In all this we discover an emotional trait whose pathological deformation is the so-called 'agoraphobia:' the fear of coming into too close a contact with objects, a consequence of hyperaesthesia, for which every direct and energetic disturbance causes pain.⁴⁶

In contrast, Loos's subject was to "have modern nerves, the nerves which the Americans possess today,"⁴⁷ and style could therefore be renounced. And where Simmel saw the barriers between individuals and their social environment as the extreme consequences of the money economy understood as the very motor of the accelerating opposition between subjective and objective culture, Loos saw the countervalue of silent walls that separated the protected private interior from the public exterior as the only possible sign of an architectural culture for the present (fig. 215).

Meanwhile, as we have seen, in other registers of representation, "the modern" has a related but quite different ideological function to play, and serves an ideal antithetical to that of private life in either its reactive or critical versions, lending up its forms, reification and all, to visions of individuality dissolved into an effect of collective life. It is here that Meyer's Co-op Zimmer makes its conceptual presence felt.

⁴⁶Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 474

⁴⁷Loos, "Kultur" (1908), in *Sämtliche Schriften*

"Co-op Zimmer" is something of a misnomer, for the project is, in fact, a photograph (fig. 222). Of course, a historical interpretation of any no longer existing interior must, at another moment in time, be based primarily on photographs.⁴⁸ But Meyer's Co-op interior has been *always only* a photograph. The "room" is mocked up of white fabric, a folding wood and canvas chair, a cot, and a phonograph on a collapsible stool; the uncropped version also shows shelves of food products. The Co-op Zimmer is an assemblage, a circuit or pattern of preliminary and interrelated signs, a "conspicuous arrangement" (Meyer), not of reified, isolated objects of contemplation, but of quasi-independent signs that still function within some larger cultural machinery that includes a conceptualization of the mobility enabled by the portable furniture, the alimentary products, and the invasion of the bedroom by the jazz band whose sound is now severed from its instruments and flattened onto a reproducible disk.⁴⁹ Meyer's interior is a text, if you will, provided the extension of that term is understood as metaphorically including such things as life habits and daily routines, means of knowing, belonging, and practicing, all fixed through chains of signification. And if we have recently learned the impropriety of asking the "meaning" of such arrangements, we can nevertheless ask of its connection to, and function within, other arrangements. In particular, it is inseparable from the article in which, along with the Co-op Vitrine, the Co-op interior first appeared, Meyer's "Die neue Welt."⁵⁰ The Co-op interior appears as the example of "Die Wohnung," on a spread entitled "Der

⁴⁸It is, perhaps, of some interest to recall Loos's assertion that his interiors could *not* be perceived in photographs.

⁴⁹In the article, "Die neue Welt," Meyer lists phonographic recordings "appropriate for the times."

⁵⁰Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt." The excerpts of Meyer that follow are from that article unless otherwise noted.

Standard" (fig. 223), as illustration of the essay's aesthetic of standardization, repetition, mechanized media, nomadicism, impersonality, and collectivity, and its polemical folding of one set of signs into the terms of another. Meyer introduces the Co-op Zimmer as follows:

The demands we make on life today are all of the same nature depending on social stratification. The surest sign of true community is the satisfaction of the same needs by the same means. The upshot of such a collective demand is the standard product. The folding chair, roll-top desk, light bulb, bath tub and portable gramophone are typical standard products manufactured internationally and showing a uniform design. They are apparatus in the mechanization of our daily life. They are manufactured in quantity as a mass-produced article, as a mass-produced device, as a mass-produced structural element, as a mass-produced house. The standard mental product is called a "hit." Because the standardization of his needs as regards housing, food and mental sustenance, the semi-nomad of our modern productive system has the benefit of freedom of movement, economies, simplification and relaxation, all of which are vitally important for him. The degree of our standardization is an index of our communal productive system.

The essay itself is an urgent and intense description of the "psychological preconditions" of a subjectivity already identified by Simmel as paradigmatic of modernity: a nervous personality which "originates in the bustle and excitement of modern life," and in "that increasing distance from nature and that particularly abstract existence that urban life, based on the money economy, has forced upon us," and which is induced by the experience of the metropolis itself, "with every crossing of the street, with the speed and diversity of economic professional, social life." Meyer's

opening lines repeat Simmel's description of the "leveling tendencies" and "fragmenting images" of "the clamorous splendor of the scientific technological age."⁵¹

The flight of the "Norge" to the North Pole, the Zeiss planetarium at Jena and Flettner's rotor ship represent the latest stages to be reported in the mechanization of our planet. Being the outcome of extreme precision in thought, they all provide striking evidence of the way in which science continues to permeate our environment. Thus in the diagram of the present age we find everywhere amidst the sinuous lines of its social and economic fields of force straight lines which are mechanical and scientific in origin. They are cogent evidence of the victory of man the thinker over amorphous nature.... Motor cars dash along our streets. On a traffic island in the Champs Elysées from 6 to 8 p.m. there rages round one metropolitan dynamicism at its most strident. "Ford" and "Rolls Royce" have burst open the core of the town, obliterating distance and effacing the boundaries between town and country.... Illuminated signs twinkle, loud-speakers screech, posters advertise, display windows shine forth.

But Meyer reverses the valence of the subjective consequences of such overstimulation, seeing its effects as expanding and sharpening our consciousness.

The simultaneity of events enormously extends our concept of "space and time," it enriches our life. We live faster and therefore longer. We have a keener sense of speed than ever before, and speed records are a direct gain for all. Gliding, parachute descents and music hall acrobatics refine our desire for balance. The precise division into hours of the time we spend working in office and factory and the split-minute timing of railway timetables make us live more consciously.

⁵¹Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 484

Co-op Zimmer produces a concept of a smoothly traversable, nomadic space which is continuous with a new collectivism and objectively determined by the imposition of new products and external forces that operate to dissolve established boundaries within various forms of experience and cognition.

Borrough's calculating machine sets free our brain, the dictaphone our hand, Ford's motor our placebound senses and Handley Page our earthbound spirits. Radio, marconigram and phototelegraphy liberate us from our national seclusion and make us part of a world community. The gramophone, microphone, orchestrion and pianola accustom our ears to the sound of impersonal-mechanized rhythms: "His Master's Voice," "Vox," and "Brunswick" see to the musical needs of millions. Psychoanalysis has burst open the all too narrow dwelling of the soul and graphology has laid bare the character of the individual.... National costume is giving way to fashion and the external masculinization of woman shows that inwardly the two sexes have equal rights. Biology, psychoanalysis, relativity and entomology are common intellectual property: France, Einstein, Freud and Fabre are the saints of this latterday. Our homes are more mobile than ever. Large blocks of flats, sleeping cars, house yachts and transatlantic liners undermine the local concept of the "homeland." The fatherland goes into a decline. We learn Esperanto. We become cosmopolitan.

By extending and prolonging the sense of each singular verbal image in the passage above, and producing a kind of transversal communication between verbal and visual images, Meyer weaves a network of externalities that map the reality of "the new world." In the chains of diverse references organized serially as facts in declarative sentences, the reader cannot help feeling a kind of dispersion, as of tracers sent out in

scattered directions registering functions of instruments, disciplines, modes of thought, habitats and habits, all of which are constituent parts of the life figured by the Co-op Zimmer.

The next passage of Meyer's essay begins with those new "factographic" methods of visual sign production which the most advanced artist in Europe and Russia were beginning to develop, and quickly moves to the psycho-visual effects of those methods.

The steadily increasing perfection attained in printing, photographic and cinematographic processes enables the real world to be reproduced with an ever greater degree of accuracy. The picture the landscape presents to the eye today is more diversified than ever before; hangars and power houses are the cathedrals of the spirit of the age. This picture has the power to influence through the specific shapes, colors and lights of its modern elements: the wireless aerials, the dams, the lattice girders; through the parabola of the airship, the triangle of the traffic signs, the circle of the railway signal, the rectangle of the billboard; through the linear element of transmission lines: telephone wires, overhead tram wires, high-tension cables; through radio towers, concrete posts, flashing lights and filling stations.

It does not simplify Meyer's enterprise to insist that the images conjured up signify modernity, for what we understand by the significance of Meyer's "picture" of the mass industrial and mass cultural landscape has less to do with the latter as a source of sheer aesthetic experimentation than it does with this picture's claim to cognitive and practical as well as visual status. The appropriation and presentation of the multiplicity of diverse images testifies to Meyer's preoccupation not only with the industrialization

process, but also with the forms of experience that are the indirect consequences of such a process. This play of images — whose emblematic value is reasserted by the presence in Meyer's article of exemplary photographs including scenes of industry and its use objects, and its repetitive morphology (fig. 223) — seeks to satisfy not only the appetite for form, but also the appetite for *matter*. The pictures stand as facts of seeing, as the actual forms of our knowledge of things (figs. 225, 226). And their richness may therefore be recognized in terms of their ability to assimilate material and productive values to visual and psychological effects, to convert the qualities of one into the forms of the other, and thereby to reunite the two levels of subjective mental labor and the objective realities of production. Co-op form attests to the possibility that forms of simultaneous collective reception, by linking the structure of subjectivity directly to the inexorable movement of mass production, can afford a kind of protopolitical and practical apprenticeship for the collective society to come. The concrete experience of the visual products of mechanization — which, understood in terms of received theories of alienation and reification, would have to stand condemned — when understood as affording epistemic access to, or a symbolic and cognitive mapping of, the now vivid and tractable consequences of modernity, may be conceived as a kind of revolutionary blueprint for action.

In the work of Loos, as we have suggested, the presence of the real is signaled not only by the isolation of the interior from the city, but also by the spatial and material discontinuities in the very fabric of the building, and the heterogeneity of kinds of labor given form in the furnishings, all of which constantly threatens to fragment the Loosian interior into a disjunctive series of *vertical* indicators of present actualities and the life

habits developed to manage them. Whereas the Co-op interior, understood as one point of ramification in the surface of a multiplicity of texts, maps its real on a *horizontal* plane. Which is not to deny that the entities, events, and actualities Meyer recounts indeed exist, but rather to return to the repudiation of that traditional view of representation broached earlier, which sees the real as something pre-existing that lies somewhere remote from the artwork, to which the latter, through subjectively reflected and conventionalized illusion, makes reference. In contrast, the constellation which is Meyer's new world absorbs the present actualities to which it makes such obsessive reference, reorganizes and extends their lines of connectivity, creates new potential subject/object relations, and thereby constitutes the very raw material of which it can then claim to be the description or representation. The real is not something that, in its plenitude, shines through the work; rather the real is won within the work itself,⁵² but it is no less real for that. Which is precisely what we are able to grasp, once we understand representation as an *act* of enunciating — as process, *performativity*, and productivity.

What is more, the recasting of artistic practice itself within the categories of technical labor entails a repudiation of the traditional base/superstructure model of reality and art, and installs artistic production as a co-force of material production generally. In 1923 Boris Arvatov had characterized this new status of artistic work as analogous to the products of craft labor.

⁵²The locution "winning of a world" is from Stanford Anderson. See especially his "The Fiction of Function," *Assemblage 2* (February 1987).

The artist began to relate to the picture, not as a field for the illusionistic depiction of objects, but as a real object. He began to work on the picture as a worker in wood works on a piece of wood.... He became in his own way a specialist and the only difference was that for him the construction was an aim in itself.⁵³

But the artistic process here compared to craft production, and the connotations carried by the terminology of "worker" and "specialist," Meyer transferred to a more advanced level where the rapprochement of art and production is achieved with the formative principles of mass technology — montage, repetition, seriality, dispersion.

Fredric Jameson has argued that what I have construed as a particular sort of representational procedure operative in Meyer's 1926 constructions is characteristic of utopian thought generally:

[I]t is possible to understand the Utopian text as a determinate type of *praxis*, rather than as a specific mode of representation, a praxis that has less to do with the construction and perfection of someone's "idea" of a "perfect society" than it does with a concrete set of mental operations to be performed on a determinate type of raw material given in advance, which is contemporary society itself — or, what amounts to the same thing, on those collective representations of contemporary society that inform our ideologies just as they order our experience of daily life.⁵⁴

⁵³Boris Arvatov, *Iskusstvo i klassy* (Moscow, 1923), 83; cited in Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 74.

⁵⁴Fredric Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse" (1977), in Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory. Essays 1971-1986*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 81

The utopian label seems right for Meyer. It is not an unfamiliar one. But I want to suggest more than the hopeful naiveté that is usually meant by the designation, and to relate his utopian stance, and the corollaries of collectivism and nomadicism, to a conception of the subject as it is constructed within and by distinct modes of production which are historically conceived but not entirely constrained by the present.

As we have seen, Loos's interior architecture is a particularly vivid demonstration, over and against the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *Jugendstil* with its optical illusion of individual existence, of subject-positions still available to architectural representation in the early 1920s. What we must now observe, however, is that that demonstration traces its norms, however accommodating or liberating, on a background of an economy still not fully industrialized and rationalized. The characteristic, typical objects and motives of Loosian *Sachlichkeit* — the leather goods and umbrellas, wood and marble paneling, oriental carpets, Kokosckas and all — still show traces of production by artisanal labor and distribution by an organization of merchants over the small shop counters designed by Loos; the individual human origins of the typical objects of this period have not yet been completely erased. Moreover, Loos's subject-positions as described by his architecture retain the ideal of individualism, and are based on a present in which the bourgeoisie was still a rising and progressive class, the nuclear family still a viable structure, and the monadic subject still in possession of some degree of resistance to the complete penetration of commodification into the innermost depths of the psyche.

We need only juxtapose Meyer's own description of the economies of "Trade union, co-operative, Ltd., Inc., cartel, trust and the League of Nations" as the forms of social expression of *his* present to feel the difference.

Yesterday is dead; Bohemia is dead. Dead are atmosphere, color values, burr, mellow tones and random brush-strokes. Dead the novel: we have neither the suspension of disbelief nor the time to read. Dead picture and sculpture as images of the real world: in the age of films and photos they are a dissipation of effort and the endless "beautification" of our real world through the interpretations of "artists" is presumptuous. Dead is the work of art as a "thing in itself," as "art for art's sake": our communal consciousness will not tolerate any individualist excesses.... Co-operation rules the world. The community rules the individual.

Henceforth the products of mass culture are completely without depth, horizontal relations replace vertical ones, and signs of individualism are precluded from the outset. While Loos's thinking maintains a continuity between the bourgeois order and what is to develop out of it, Meyer's demands an absolute break with the past and a taking hold of the ineluctable progress of history toward the socialist future. "[O]ur knowledge of the past is a burden that weighs upon us, and inherent in our advanced education are impediments tragically barring our new paths. The unqualified affirmation of the present age presupposes the ruthless denial of the past." The Co-op form stands as a sign of the kind of mental retooling the human subject must undergo to divest itself of its historically conditioned defects and failures of development and begin its journey toward the classless future.

To be sure, then, Meyer's Co-op interior has its preconditions in capitalist modes of production even more advanced than those Loos conceived across the watershed of World War I. It is, however, the anticipatory representation of an altogether different international culture of the future that seeks to emerge from the dominant modes of production of the present which distinguishes the Co-op interior from those of Loos. And it is this same partisan commitment to that utopian mode of production that also distinguishes the two in terms of subjectivity. For while the subjects constructed by Loos and Meyer are both born of their historical present and, as such, are historically *decentered*, Co-op form differs not only in its more complete massification and dispersion of the subject, but also in that it is predicated on a conception of the subject at the other end of historical time, indeed, on the possibility that some transformation of society will have put behind it that class organization, alienated labor, and the market economy from which it emerged. It is only from *this* utopian vantageground that Meyer's antihumanist subjectivity has any purchase.

This said, and with Jameson's thesis in mind that utopian thought can be understood essentially as a process of mediation or *neutralization*⁵⁵ — a resolution, by way of figural thinking, of a real social contradiction between infrastructure and superstructure — Co-op form can be construed as the structural resolution of the dilemma of historical materialist thought: the insertion of the subject into an *as-yet-unachieved* (but presently emergent) mode of production. As such, Co-op form is, moreover, the structural *obversion* of Simmel's theory of style, which is itself presented as the resolution or mediation of monadic subjectivity and the capitalist mode

⁵⁵Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches," *passim*.

of production. All of which can now be represented diagrammatically as a structure of signification with what A. J. Greimas calls his "semiotic rectangle."⁵⁶

This rudimentary structure (fig. 228) is capable of generating a number of distinct mediatory combinations. First, a complex term *C* mediates between two primary terms of opposition, *S* and *-S*. Two secondary terms of opposition, *B* and *-B*, are expressed as involutions of the first. This second opposition, in turn, produces as its resolution what is virtually a double cancellation of the initial contradiction, which is, in effect, the latter's neutralization, the so-called neutral term, *N*. In our present case (fig. 229), Simmel's concept of style is the complex term, and Loos's anti-style can be situated coincidentally with Simmel's style as a mediation of the intolerable contradictions between the monadic subject and capitalism, except with a negative valence. The term of involution of capitalism — the "not-capitalism," so to speak, of the semiotic rectangle — then comprises not only the sense of the anticipated mode of production of achieved socialism according to a classical historical materialist interpretation, but also the forms of *reception* and other indirect consequences of such a process, which Meyer described in "Die neue Welt." The involution of the centered, monadic subject can analogously be thought in negative terms as the loss, dissolution, and cancellation of the subject — as the "not-subject" of the semiotic rectangle — or in positive terms as the displacement of the monadic, centered subject by a decentered subject-*effect*, what I have called the nomadic, collective, antihumanist subject. Finally, the notion of Co-op, which organizes both the objects of a future mode of

⁵⁶See A. J. Greimas and François Rastier, "The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints," *Yale French Studies* 41 (1968): 86-105.

production and antihumanist subjectivity as a mode of reception, can be understood as the neutral, or mediatory, utopian term of the structure, what I have earlier called the obversion of Simmel's complex term of style.

The scheme suggests, in general as Jameson argues, that the vocation of the neutral term, here Co-op, is "to permit a desperate (and impossible) final attempt to eradicate the contradictions of the system by some extreme gesture."⁵⁷ It also repudiates the conventional understanding of Meyer's utopia as a mere invocation or image of some ideal society, and substitutes a notion of utopia as a process whereby something *is done to the real*, and whereby the operations performed and actualized are initiated and carried by a *reading* of the Co-op projects themselves.

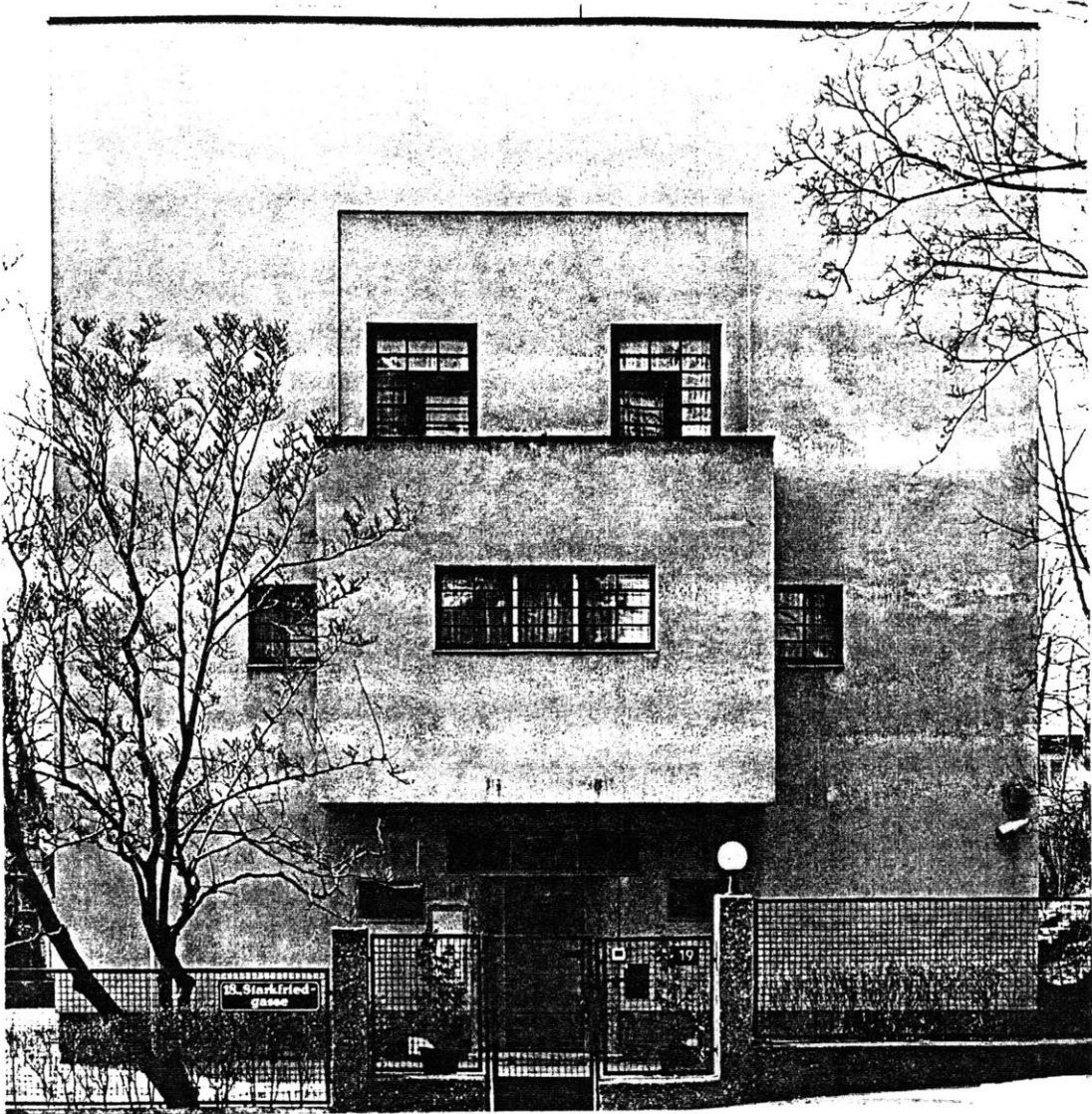
Now, recognizing that the signifying object, the Co-op form, in some sense adequately names that which propels this process, this activity of reading, then we have also finally landed here on the notion, invoked earlier, of *performativity* — now understood in the properly utopian sense that critical reading performs and constitutes that which *in the present world* always escapes us. Concretely, this emphasis on performativity implies that the potential for conceptualizing change, the potential even of meaningful protopolitical action, is produced and made available, albeit only in a symbolic mode, in the analyses of the aesthetic construct and the ideological-material conditions that determine its formation.

But further, by focusing his analysis on the status of the subject as constructed and situated by those same conditions, Meyer invites us to conceive of the function of the centered subject of bourgeois humanism as a kind of imposition of blindness or

⁵⁷Jameson, 91

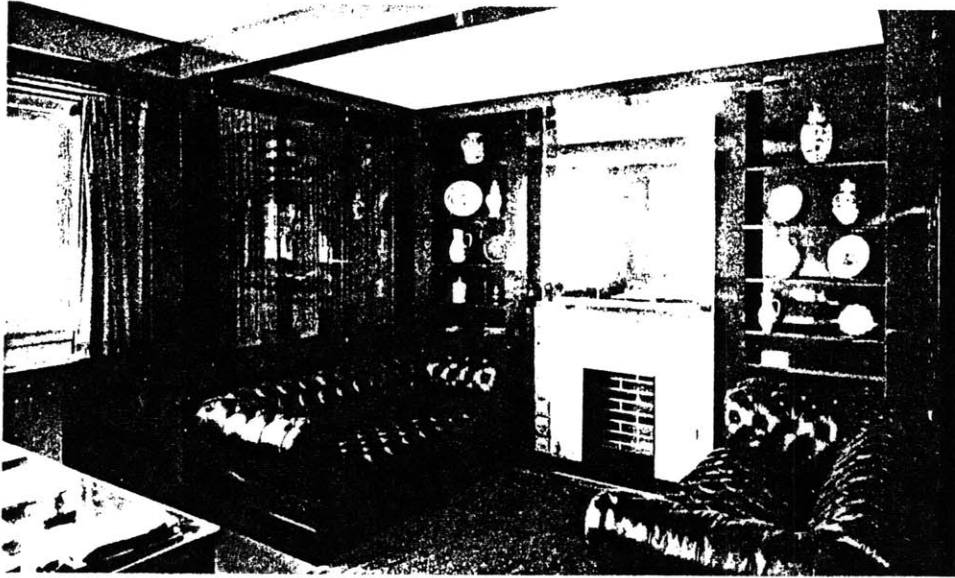
obstruction of inquiry into the hidden institutional frameworks and ideological factors that determine the work and the conditions under which it is apprehended. This is the case most obviously in the work of architects where the objects themselves operate to discourage if not preclude considerations of the necessary constitutive preconditions of their formation; but it is also the case, it should be added, in those critical-interpretive positions that confine a "correct" reading of an architectural object to an acceptance of the position from which the immanent characteristics of the architectural object have exclusive importance over its external historical and ideological determinants: the position of a transcendental subject. In contrast, Meyer will seek, within the terms provided by Co-op form, to develop a more full-blown architecture — a project for constructing, for acting, for *building* — that problematizes architecture as such — as a discipline, an ideology, a cultural institution — and that dismantles our routine, institutionalized business of design and our habitual, institutionalized modes of perception, all in order to show just how deeply questionable the architectural, interpretive, and cultural values bourgeois humanism has taken for granted actually are.

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



215. Adolf Loos, Moller house, Vienna, 1928

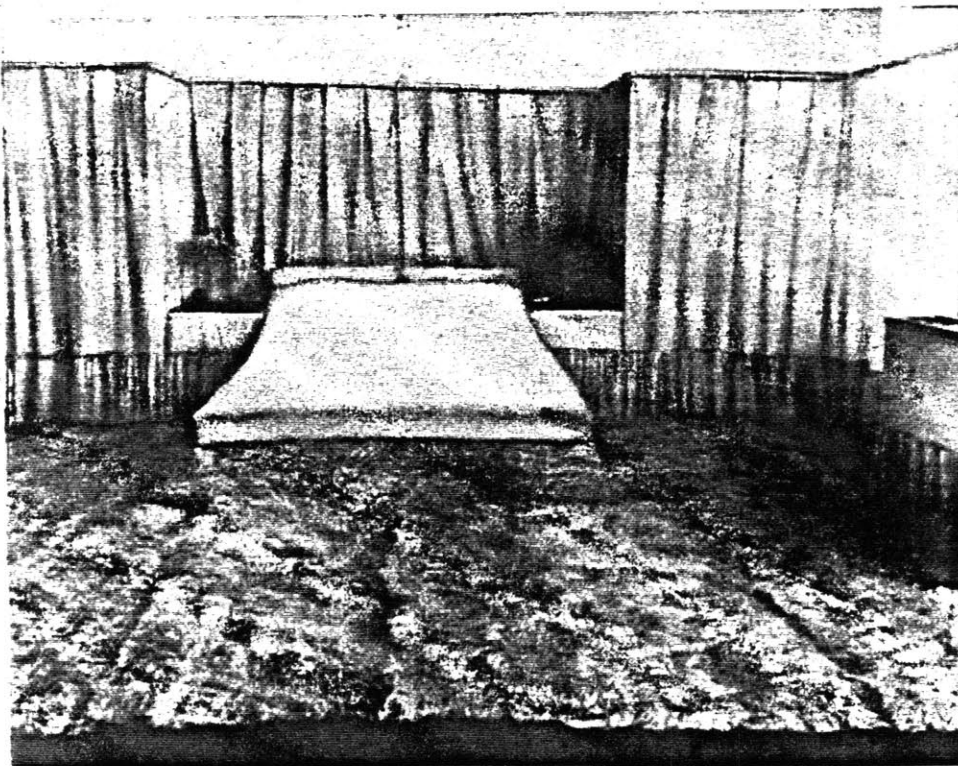
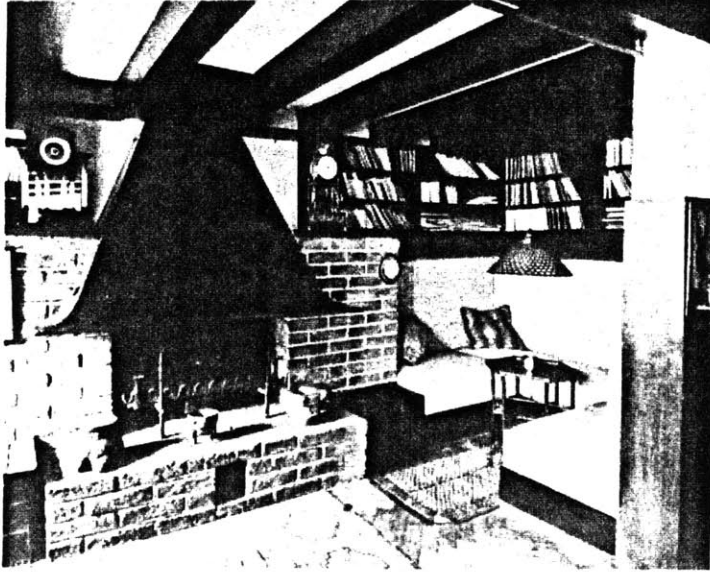
Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



216. Loos, Steiner house, Vienna, 1910,
men's smoking room

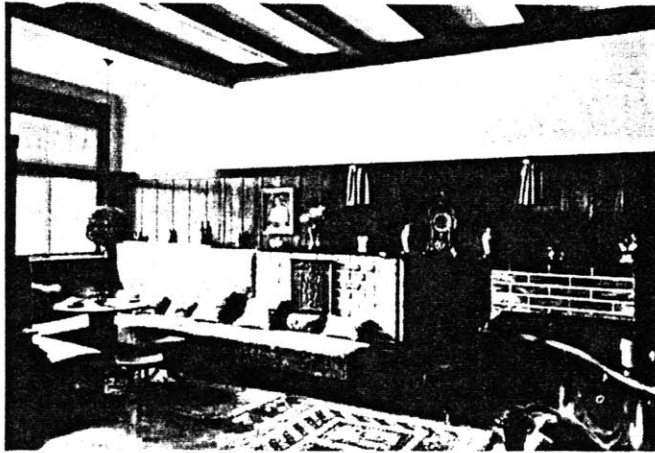
217. Steiner house, *Zimmer der Dame*

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



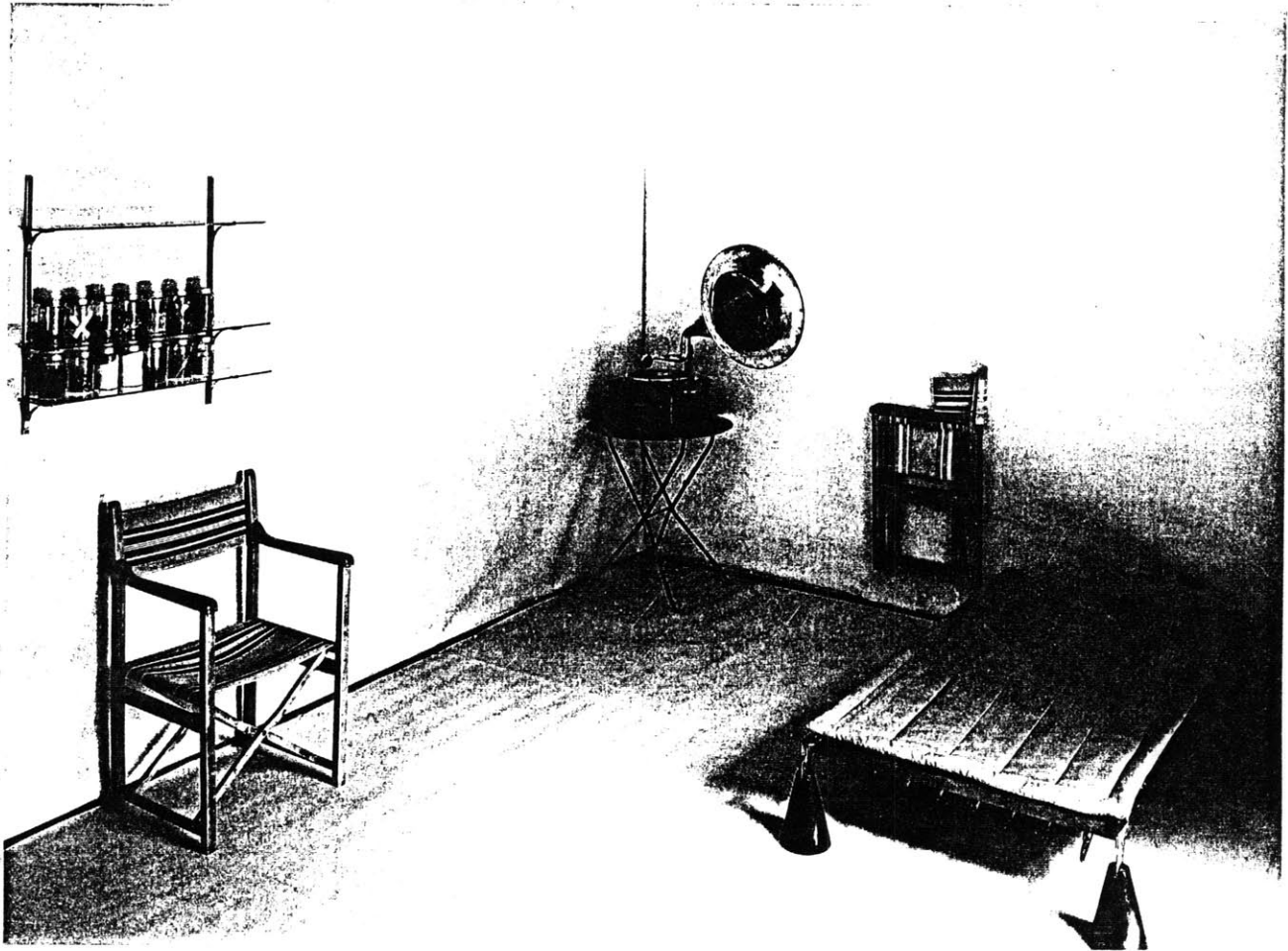
218. Loos, architect's apartment
219. Loos, Lina Loos's bedroom

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



220. Moller house, dining room
221. Steiner house, living room

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



222. Hannes Meyer, Co-op Zimmer, 1926

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer

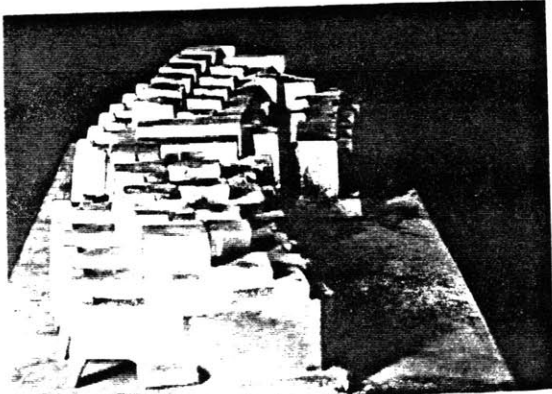
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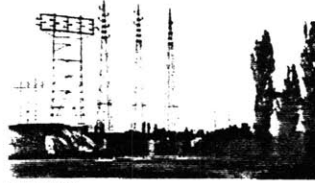


MUNITIONSBEBEITER-SIEDELUNG WELLS HALL
ZU ELTHAM, KENT
Bauingenieur: Hermann Finsterlin, Architekt: Hermann Finsterlin, Bauführung: Hermann Finsterlin



FÜR FAHRT BERLIN. MODELLENTWURF FÜR EXPORTWAGEN IN HAMBURG 1926
Architekt: Hannes Meyer, Ingenieur: Hermann Finsterlin, Bauführung: Hermann Finsterlin

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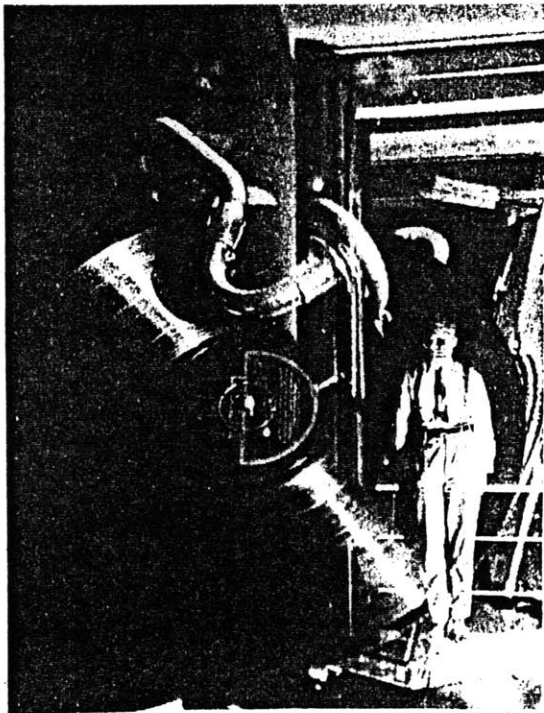
DIE LANDSCHAFT
von Adolf Loos, Jakob Josef Scharoun



DIE SIEDELUNG

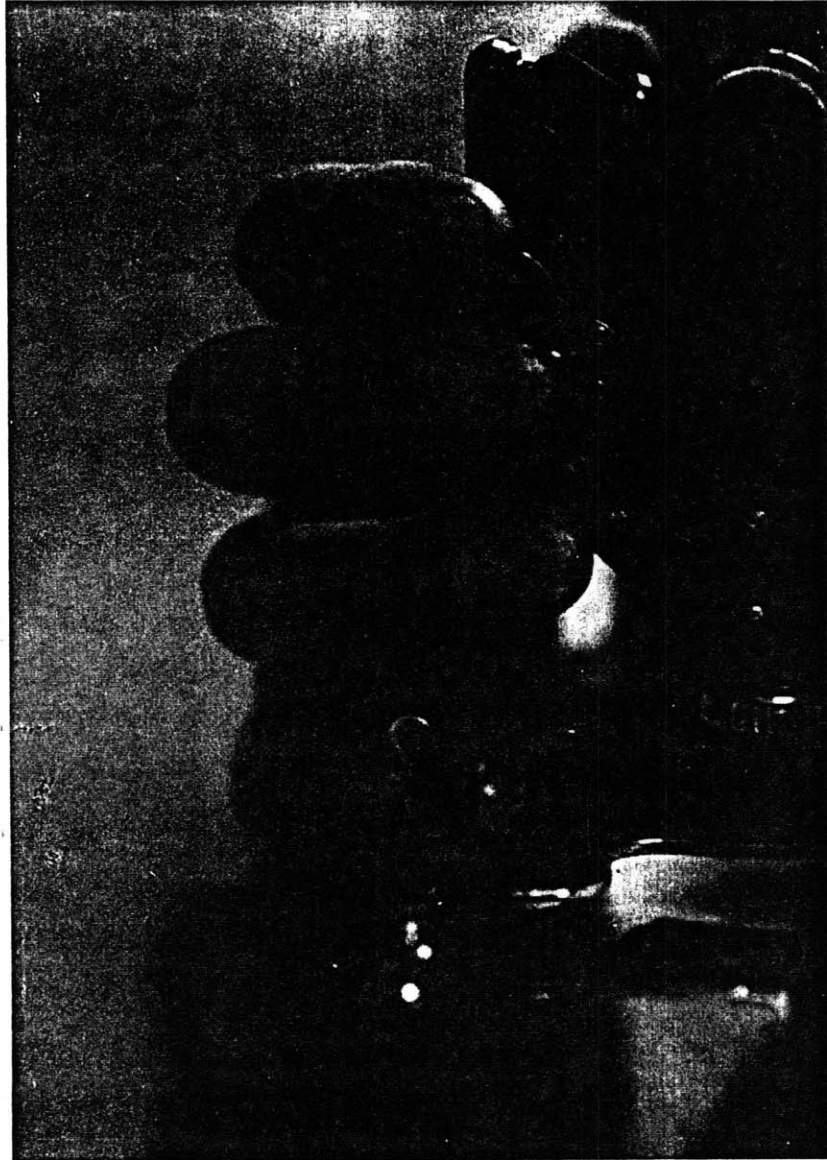


DIE WOHNUNG



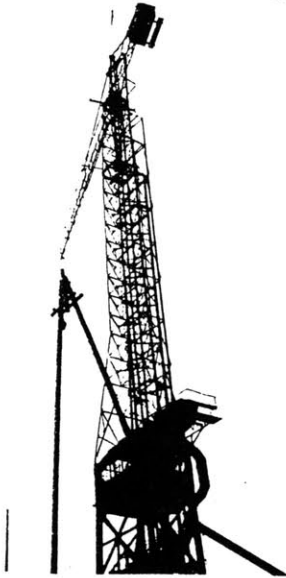
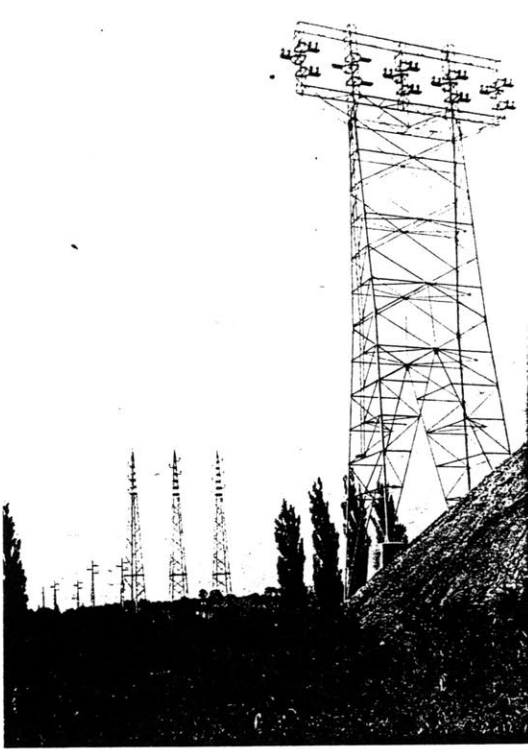
223. Spread entitled "Der Standard" from Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt," Das Werk 7 (Bern, 1926), showing the Co-op Zimmer with other standardized productions
224. Heinz Loew, Self-portrait in record player: sandwich photo, c. 1928

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



225. Hannes Meyer, "Photographing," c.
1928

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer



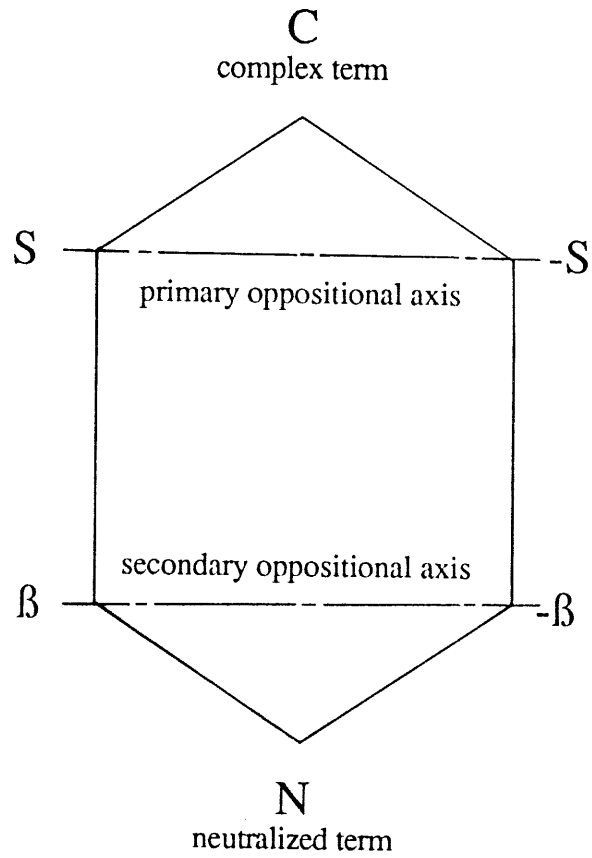
226. Meyer, photographs of high tension wires, turbine hall, and building crane, all near Basel, c. 1926

Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer

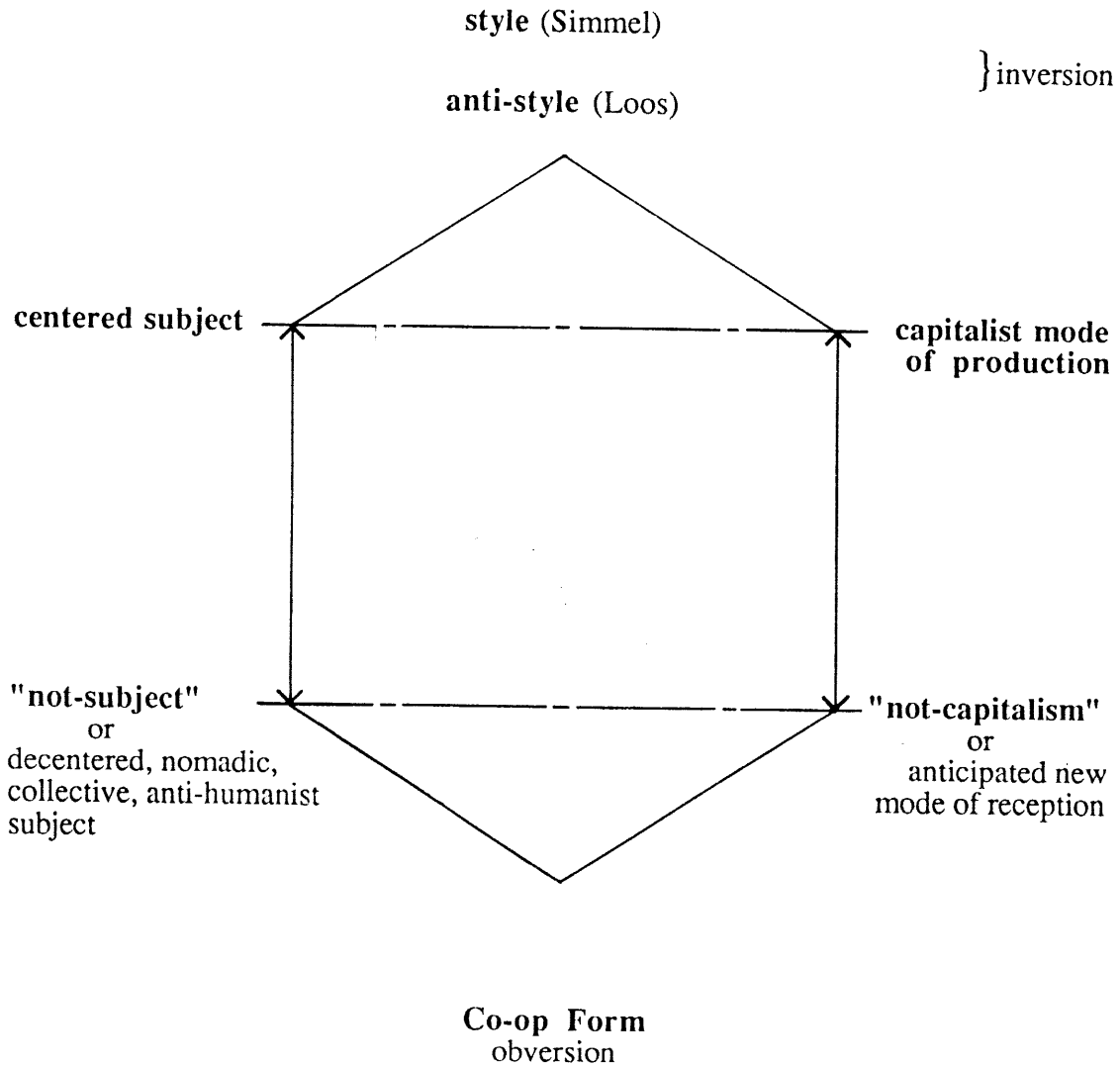


DIE ZEITSCHRIFT

227. "Magazines and books adequate to out time" selected by Meyer from his library published with "Die neue Welt"



228. Diagram of semiotic rectangle from A. J. Greimas



229. Diagram of Co-op form as resolution of antihumanist subjectivity and anticapitalist mode of production

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: The Petersschule

In the section of his Das Prinzip Hoffnung, "Building in Empty Spaces," Ernst Bloch characterized the *neue Sachlichkeit* in architecture:

Today, in many places, houses look as if they were ready to travel [*reisefertig*]. Although they are unadorned, or precisely because of that, they express their farewell. Their interior is bright and sterile like hospital rooms, the exterior looks like boxes on top of mobile poles, but also like ships. They have flat decks, portholes, gangways, railings; they shine white and to the south, and as ships they like to disappear.⁵⁸

Writing in America during 1938-49, Bloch found little hope expressed in such architecture, product as it was of "the late capitalist hollow space" and abstract technology. "Rather this hollow space penetrates the so-called art of engineering [*Ingenieurkunst*] as much as the latter increases the hollowness by its own emptiness." Nevertheless,

recently there is a particularly alienating motive, which is basically the *only original* one. It is *engineering as architecture*, which has a significant utopian effect. Now it is engineering into which architecture as the real art has been

⁵⁸Ernst Bloch, "Die Bebauung des Hohlraums," in Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), published as "Building in Empty Spaces," in Bloch, The Utopian Function of Art and Literature, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988); passage cited is on 187.

incorporated and from which it has to reemerge on the threshold of a concrete society. What it means here is the new combination of the old utopia of crystallization [of Ledoux et al.] with the *desire to disorganize*. This kind of combination is precisely related to the abstract technology itself with which the new architecture is so closely linked and provides also disorganization *sui generis* for the crystalline urban utopia.... Thus the house without aura, the city map made of affirmed lifelessness and distance to people... corresponds to the machine that no longer resembles the human being. Functional architecture reflects and doubles anyway the icy realm of commodity world automation, its alienation, its labor-divided human beings, its abstract technology....⁵⁹

Only a new classless society would make a "true" architecture possible. Thus for Bloch, "The only significant thing in all this is the direction of the departure of these phenomena generated by themselves, i.e., the house as a ship."⁶⁰

It is on the whole a negative judgment of the architecture of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, and it could just as well apply specifically to the buildings designed by Hannes Meyer. Yet one aspect of the architecture described by Bloch hangs in our minds with disturbingly ambiguous resonance: *the architecture likes to disappear*. It is this anti-social and negational quality of this sharp, stark, "hollow" architecture, but also and not inconsistently its utopian effect, that must concern us now, as we verify the observations made thus far against Meyer's "Co-op building," the Petersschule project for Basel of 1926 (fig. 229). This machine-building "no longer resembles the human being," we will agree, but it is precisely in defining the nature of the Petersschule's dislocation of the spectator from his accustomed imaginary possession

⁵⁹Bloch, "Building in Empty Spaces," 196; emphasis in original

⁶⁰Ibid., 190

of a unified architectural object that resembles his desired unified self that we will gain a description of the architectural object such that its protopolitical character becomes visible. For in the case of the Petersschule, as with all Co-op form, it is not a matter of inventing representational forms adequate to the content of "the new world," but rather of *producing* the content of that world through the work and the reorganization of perceptual conventions by which the object is apprehended. Like other Co-op form, the building is constructed from appropriated raw material. In readying itself for travel, therefore, the Petersschule must take on certain presumed *negative*, alienating and reified characteristics of the very condition it seeks to transform, as well as of the ideologies and institutions that, incompletely liquidated, still survive from that older mode of production which the avant-garde generally sought to address. What this will mean in the case of the Petersschule, not unlike the case of the Co-op Vitrine, is a paradoxical and disjunctive imbrecation of different architectural modes. First are the modernist autotelic formal strategies, previously worked out as critical negations of traditional, institutionalized perceptual conventions. Second are the techniques of a different functionalist or utilitarian kind, which involve an assault on the modernist notion of aesthetic autonomy, even as a strategy of resistance, and imply an instrumentalization of the architectural object now indistinguishable from an industrial tool.

As we have seen, Meyer's Freidorf experience should be understood to stand behind his Co-op work. After 1900 a number of progressive architects turned to a rationalized, measurable, artless, and practical architecture which attempted to synthesize and maintain the best of English and German domestic building traditions.

For Meyer, it was this same architecture, conjoined with the reformist planning of the garden city movement, that seemed to best accommodate and represent cooperative life (see figs. 231-237). At Freidorf, the cooperative hall (*Genossenschaftshaus*) is configured as a *Zellenbau*, its monumentality dissolved by a cellular structure repeated through all the buildings (figs. 233, 235, 236). Meyer's own description of the project is sufficient. As well as the garden city model of planning, Freidorf was based on Palladian proportional systems. In 1916 Meyer had

used my free time to draw all Palladio's plans on thirty standard sheets of paper (size 420/594) in common scale. This work on Palladio prompted me to design my first housing scheme, the Freidorf estate on the modular system of an architectural order. By means of this system all the external spaces... and all public internal spaces... were laid out in an artistic pattern *which would be perceived by those living there as the spatial harmony of proportion*.⁶¹

The conception of form as "applied psychology"⁶² reconfirms the beginning of Meyer's trajectory toward the radicalization of perception. Proportional harmony for Meyer is the architecturalization of the harmony of socialism (a compositional harmony replaced in his subsequent work with a "constructed" asymmetry which "symbolizes nothing"⁶³). Likewise the Siedlung's red color, what Adolf Behne called a "symphony in red"⁶⁴ stands as a symbol of Freidorf's social commitments. The architecture is

⁶¹Hannes Meyer, "Wie ich arbeite," *Architektura CCCP* 6 (Moskow, 1933); MS in German; partial translation in Schnaidt, *Hannes Meyer*, 19-21; my emphasis

⁶²Letter from Meyer to Graf Dürckheim 24 August 1930, in *Hannes Meyer. Bauen und Gesellschaft. Schriften, Briefe, Projekte* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1980)

⁶³See section III on the League of Nations project.

⁶⁴Adolf Behne, paraphrasing Meyer in a review of Meyer's ADGB school, *Pädagogische Beilage zur Sächsischen Schulzeitung* 20, no. 5 (June 1928): 41

perceived as an instrument of social perceptual change. Meyer continues his description:

All the building elements used at Freidorf were standardized and these standard elements conferred a certain unity upon each type of house. At the start there were no Swiss standards for building with standardized elements and in this important field of house building we had to start from scratch. It was in this way that Freidorf standards came into being: dimensions, shapes and materials for framing timbers, mouldings and balusters, for four types of window and three types of door, the the house entrance, staircase and verandah, central stove and animal hutches. Although the co-operators no doubt appreciated the economic aspects of this standardization, it mostly ran counter to their sense of beauty. In regard to architectural simplification, the Freidorf standards go the the utmost limits of what the individualistic Swiss will tolerated in matters of taste and any further paring away of "architecture" will be branded as "prison and barrack" building and meet with an almost unbroken front of public resistance....

Both inside and outside [the cooperative hall] has yielded to the law of uniformity governing the estate and only the double scale on which everything is built marks the public building. *Man looks small once he enters the temple of the community. Even the layman, faced with the interplay of wall surfaces and window apertures, becomes dimly aware of the influence of an all-dominating module....*⁶⁵

The function of Meyer's repetitive language is to write across the face of the architecture the reiterative, serial building system of a collective society, to unfold

⁶⁵Hannes Meyer, "Freidorf housing estate, near Basle, 1919-21," trans. in Schnaidt, 7, 13; my emphasis

architecture into the exteriority of mass technology and language, which would be more aggressively presented in the Petersschule and the League of Nations.

By 1926 Meyer had inverted and questioned the tradition on which his Siedlung was based as a viable mode of revolutionary and transformatory signification, renouncing Freidorf as the "product of an incomprehensible time."⁶⁶ In the Petersschule, the fundamental architectural principles of the Siedlung Freidorf are exploded by modernity and the machine.

Meyer's travels during 1923-26⁶⁷ acquainted him with the various avant-garde formal practices and the most progressive constructivist and productivist theories in Europe and the Soviet Union, the last of which, in their attempt to link artistic activity directly to material-social production, drew to some extent on the former, but also voiced an optimism concerning the revolutionary powers of mechanization, Taylorism, and the Americanization of culture. By the time Meyer began the Petersschule project, the standardization and machine production of buildings and building components was a well rehearsed topic, but still one of intense ambiguity and irresolution. Indeed, within the Soviet context, theorists like Boris Arvatov and Sergei Tretyakov strove for a materialist definition of art practice which challenged the premises of bourgeois aesthetics, but also implicitly those of Leninist aesthetics as well. What links bourgeois and Leninist conceptions of art is the emphasis on an ontological and

⁶⁶Hannes Meyer, "Die Siedlung Freidorf," *Das Werk* 12, no. 2 (1925): 40-51. But see Jacque Gubler's discussion in *Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975) where he argues that significant lessons of the Freidorf experience can be traced throughout Meyer's later work. Gubler's argument is consistent, I think, with the trajectory I am constructing here.

⁶⁷Hannes Meyer, "Curriculum vitae," in Meyer, *Bauen und Gesellschaft*, 10-14

epistemological independence of artistic values, an artistic consciousness that is a subjectively reflected and passive repository for finished products of thought. When Arvatov denounced "easel art" — art as a supplementation and sublimation of a disharmonized reality — and when he called for art not as something autonomous and self-contained but rather as a desublimatized form of destruction of the division between artistic technique and social technology — "the possibility of using a mighty and all-enveloping technology consciously to create and build [society's] life"⁶⁸ — he directly challenged bourgeois avantgardism *and* socialist realism. For socialist realism amounts to an art that, rather than a "winning of reality," is a representation or reflection of a preexisting reality, a communicable duplicate or replica of pre-established modes of knowing and being, such as the inevitable coming of socialism through the collapse of capitalism, and the Party as a mediator of that process.

Hence, too, the ambiguity of the work of the two figures who were most influential in Meyer's development, El Lissitzky and Le Corbusier, and their attitude toward machine technology. Lissitzky, presumed to be doing above-ground work for an international constructivism, was, at the same time, adjusting his position in adequation of emergent Leninist directives for art and its audience. In 1924, Lissitzky wrote, "We have had *enough* of perpetually hearing MACHINE, MACHINE, MACHINE, when it comes to modern art production. The machine is no more than a brush, and a very primitive one at that, which portrays a view of life on the canvas."⁶⁹

⁶⁸Boris Arvatov, cited in Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 106

⁶⁹El Lissitzky, "Nasci" (1924), in El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts, ed. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 330. Compare Arvatov's statement that "the specific

Without sacrificing the autonomy and self-referentiality of a thoroughly modern artform, Lissitzky reintroduced into his *veschist* work after 1922 new sources and strategies for affirmative representation which were parallel to ongoing socialist realist experiments.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, within the discourse of L'Esprit Nouveau, between 1920 and 1922, Le Corbusier had developed the Maison Citrohan (fig. 242), a standardized house constructed of a monolithic concrete frame, and comprising a simple volumetric unit with a single major light source, a roof terrace, an exterior stair and, in a version raised on piloti, a balcony wrapping around its volume. As the name indicates, the Maison Citrohan was emblematic of an entire ethos of building now standardized and mass produced like a car, and it can stand, along with the "Horizontal Skyscraper" of Lissitzky (fig. 238), and a 1922 Vkhutemas project from N. A. Ladovsky's studio for a restaurant suspended from a cliff over the sea (fig. 239), published in ABC 3-4 in 1925,⁷¹ as a primary predecessor of the Petersschule, in terms of both its volumetric typology and emblematic status as a reproducible unit.⁷² The Petersschule is built on a

instrument of aesthetic painting, the brush, plays an increasingly small role in art; it is supplanted by planes, files, emery paper, drills, etc." Cited in Lodder, 105.

⁷⁰See my essay, "Photomontage and Its Audiences, Berlin, circa 1922," in Harvard Architecture Review 6 (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," October 30 (Fall 1984): 82-119.

⁷¹The caption in ABC reads "Gestaltung der technischen Möglichkeiten moderner Materialien und Konstruktionen. Studium der Funktionen von Treppen, Plattformen und Aufzügen." The project was from Ladovsky's course of 1922 for the design of a building of a functionally specific task and the demonstration of mass and balance.

⁷²Francesco Passanti, in a lecture to the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, 4 April 1990, has pointed out that the terms under which the Maison Citrohan was introduced by Le Corbusier — *les standarts*, *type*, and *machine á* — were already understood to convey a sense of collectivity. This was continuous with the concerns of some members of the Werkbund (such as Hermann Muthesius) for the expression of a collective experience of existing, German society. But it also could have been understood by Meyer as an international collective.

steel framework resting on eight columns, possibly a transformation of the Maison Citrohan's concrete frame. And the balcony of Maison Citrohan, wrapping around the basic volumetric unit, becomes in the Petersschule the suspended platforms for the play area. Alternatively, the volumetric unit of the Petersschule can be seen as an analogue to the reiterative volumes of the restaurant suspended from a cliff, or of Lissitzky's "skycraper," and the suspended platform as a technical expedient increasing the building's use value and accommodating it to the particulars of its site.

As concerns the consequent conception of the architectural object and its author, however, Meyer departs from both Lissitzky's and Le Corbusier's research. Lissitzky's depiction of art and life in his Proun constructions, for example, is accomplished through a rarefied mode of sublation: his pieces of the world have been transfigured into thoroughly special, uncommon, abstracted meanings, saturated with mystical, transcendental aspirations. The remoteness of his practice is captured by Ernst Kallai in his essay, "Lissitzky."

The man of the future, liberated from social anarchy and the dark ferment of psychosis... is today still a beginning, a single cell, simple, elementary, but with definite possibilities of future heroic realization. For this very reason, however, *in no case must he become entangled in the net of contradictory, impure relationships of the present, with its tattered and mediocre reality.*⁷³

In the transcendental space of the Prouns, the last contingencies of raw materiality and circumstantiality are absorbed into forms built up stereometrically from dematerialized

⁷³Ernst Kallai, "Lissitzky," in *El Lissizky: Life, Letters, Texts*; my emphasis

planes intersecting along an imaginary, generative armature. With the insertion of iconic elements into this spatial structure, the surface tension of the Proun is relaxed in favor of a kind of pictorial space into which we can enter — a space apart from life, a space in which the mind is free to make its own connections, to dream of the new world to emerge from the final denouement of the revolution, to escape from the present, to be suspended between the contaminated real and the disinfected unreal. Thus, though he could agree with Lissitzky's dictum that the mission of art "is not, after all, to embellish life but to organize it,"⁷⁴ Meyer, at this point in the trajectory of his work, still sought an aesthetic of non-consent — one immersed in the contradictory, impure reality but with a negative stance toward it — and redirected what lessons he may have learned from Lissitzky toward engagement and pleasure in untransformed materials more dialectically related to formal organization.

Consider, for example, Meyer's Co-op Construction I of 1926 (fig. 244), the only example of Meyer's own work published in ABC 2, which he edited.⁷⁵ It resembles in its formal organization nothing so much as a three-dimensional Proun with its layered space, diagonal placement within the frame of the photograph, geometrical purity, and visual transparency. These are the signs of the formal avant-garde. But in the context of Meyer's Co-op work (the title "Co-op Construction" is not unimportant), the piece takes on another signification. The glass fragments are unworked; they are palpably glass; they do not consent to a purely visual apprehension but tend toward

⁷⁴El Lissitzky, "The blockade of Russia moves toward its end," in Veshch, 1922; reprinted in El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts, 340-41

⁷⁵Other works published were by W. Baumeister, N. Gabo, K. Malewitsch, G. Vantongerloo, Mondrian, L. Moholy-Nagy, V. Servrankx, W. Dexel, L. Kassak, O. Nerlinger, and El Lissitzky: the Prounenraum, 1922, and Proun, 1925.

factual and technical construction. More important, the white ovoid is, after all, an egg, which tends, beyond its geometrical purity, toward an identification with the alimentary products of cooperative societies like Freidorf and the utopian modes of production and consumption they anticipate. As Jacques Gubler has written, "the co-op egg of 1926 is consumable, not by way of the oneiric, not in the sense of surrealism, but rather by way of the oral."⁷⁶ And the piece is, after all, constructed, not painted or carved, which links the activity of creation to the activity of work.⁷⁷ The construction of the object begins to enter the process of collective-cooperative organization directed toward the socialization of all objects of use. In this doubled significance, formal and constructive, visual and factual, the Co-op Construction I stands between the experiments of the avant-garde and the specific instruments of social-perceptual change.

Similarly, the Petersschule comprises two orders of parts: the reproducible volumetric unit and the various attachments of platforms, walkways, and stairs (fig. 243). Like the egg, the reproducibility of the basic unit of the school shifts our conception of the building's production from one of a unique creation to one of standardization and repeatability. And like the planes of glass of the Co-op Construction, the attachments to the volume convey a sense of constructedness and tactility, of appropriated industrial components organized in terms of utility and

⁷⁶Jacque Gubler (ed.), *ABC. Architettura e avanguardia, 1924-1928* (Milano: Electa, 1983), 128; my translation

⁷⁷Lest this assertion seem overly facile, the reader may recall Mikhail Tarabukin's remarks that the artist's task is that of "linking the very process of work with that of creativity," of creating "real objects" which have no prototype in the real world but are "constructed from start to finish outside lines which could be extended from it to reality." For a discussion, see Lodder, 101 ff.

intensified visual effect. The specific attachments constitute the volume as particular, while the reproducible volume constitutes the whole as a generally available, standardized system of construction and use.

On the other hand, while Le Corbusier maintained a distinction between the practical, technical role of the engineer and the artistic, poetic role of the architect in order to preserve the humanist autonomy of the latter, Meyer sought to eliminate traditionally conceived art altogether in favor of pure technique and the technical organization of a building in a collaborative practice. Thus to Le Corbusier's "engineering on the one hand, architecture on the other,"⁷⁸ Meyer would reply,

The new building is a prefabricated unit for site assembly and, as such, an industrial product and a work of specialists: economists, statisticians, hygienists, climatologists, industrial engineers, standards experts, heat engineers ... and the architect? He was an artist and has become a specialist in organization!⁷⁹

As in similar pronouncements made by Soviet productivists, the term "specialist" here carries a paradoxical repudiation of the individuation of the artist separate from other workers, and thereby articulates a sense of sublation of art and life divergent from that of Lissitzky's and Le Corbusier's.

⁷⁸Le Corbusier, "The New Spirit in Architecture" (1924), in *L'Almanach d'Architecture Moderne* (Paris: Editions Crés, 1925): 21-23; translated in *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939*, ed. Tim and Charlotte Benton (London: The Open University Press, 1975), 134-36

⁷⁹Hannes Meyer, "bauen" (1928), trans. in Schnaidt; ellipsis in original

In a rudimentary sense, Meyer's conception of the mechanization of building, already enunciated in the Co-op work considered earlier, is summarized in the manifesto, "ABC fordert die Diktatur der Maschine," published by Mart Stam and Hans Schmidt in ABC 4, series 2, 1927-28. It will be helpful in advancing the present argument to compare this summary to Le Corbusier's position.

The machine is neither the coming paradise in which technology will fulfill all our wishes — nor the approaching hell in which all human development will be destroyed —

The machine is nothing more than the inexorable dictator of the possibilities and tasks common to all our lives.

But we are still in a state of becoming, of transition. The machine has become the servant of bourgeois individualist culture born of the Renaissance. Just as the servant is paid and despised by the same master, so the machine is simultaneously used by the citizen and damned by his intellectual court, his artists, scholars and philosophers. The machine is not a servant, however, but a dictator — it dictates how we are to think and what we have to understand. As leader of the masses, who are inescapably bound up with it, it demands more insistently every year the transformation of our economy, our culture....

We have taken the first step: the transition from an individualistically producing society held together *ideally* by the concepts of the national State and a racially delimited religious outlook, to a capitalistically producing society *materially* organized in response to the need for industrialization and the international exchange of goods....

We have to take the second step: the transition from a society that is *compelled* to produce collectively but is still individualistically oriented to a society that *consciously* thinks and works collectively. Empty phrases? Empty phrases to

the ears of bourgeois armchair sceptics — implacable necessity to the masses who have today been thrust out to the edge of survival....⁸⁰

In contrast to this linking of machine technology to the capitalist mode of production in terms of *how* the technology is used and to whose advantage, foregrounding capitalism's emancipatory possibilities from the vantage of their fuller realization in the posthumanist future and thereby demanding a corresponding and historically inevitable transformation of artistic institutions, Le Corbusier saw the consequences of mechanization primarily in received humanist terms of hierarchy, affect, and the maintenance of distinctions. For instance, in his L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui of 1925, he offered a selection of photographs of a turbine, ship propellers, and a light house beacon⁸¹ as examples in the chapter "The Lesson of the Machine," as an "apology for what is simply banal, indifferent, or void of artistic intention." Yet, at the same time, he could compare the evocations of these modern machines to the most primitive and powerful of emotions.

He was thunderstruck by a turbine of which he could see no more than the envelope, though he could hear its fearsome roar, because he knew that as a result of this noise, something would now run along those wires, those cables, and bring light and energy to the furthest corners of the country, and death to those who touched them. This light-house beacon by Sauter-Harlé, standing as pure as a negro god, sent out a beam of intense light over fabulous distances on

⁸⁰ABC 4, vol. 2, (1927-28); translation in Ulrich Conrads, Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 115-116

⁸¹In fact, the illustration for the lighthouse beacon did not arrive in time for publication. On page 108 of L'Art décoratif, Le Corbusier noted: "Entire page reserved for illustration of a lighthouse beacon by ANCIENS ETABLISSEMENTS SAUTER-HARLÉ, 16 Avenue de Suffren, PARIS." The illustration is reproduced in Assemblage 4 (1987): 5.

stormy nights at sea.... Everything overwhelmed him, even the astonishing taste shown in the colors used by engineers to finish off their products.⁸²

Le Corbusier's is a poignant struggle to reconcile the fact of machine technology, the signs of industry, their representation and rearrangement in photographs, advertisements, paintings, and buildings, with the inexorable desire for contemporary objects with all the auratic power of a primitive totem. A theme throughout L'Esprit Nouveau is the tension between the values of industrialization and those required to practice his classically conceived art, between standardized mass culture and the traditional conception of the auratic object, or to put it another way, between the lighthouse beacon and the "negro god." Moreover, Le Corbusier's is an effort to distinguish and uphold the continuity of the cult of genius with respect to a humanistically conceived tradition of art.

[W]e have to pass judgment: The Sistine Chapel first, then chairs and file cabinets — to tell the truth, problems of a second order, as the cut of a man's suit is a second-order problem in his life. Hierarchy. First the Sistine Chapel, that is, works where passion is inscribed. Then, machines for sitting, for classifying, for illuminating, *machine-types*, problems of purification, of cleanliness.⁸³

⁸²Le Corbusier, L'Art decoratif d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Editions Crés, 1925), p. 109-10; translated as The Decorative Art of Today, trans. James Dunnett (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987)

⁸³Le Corbusier, The Decorative Art of Today, 57

It is precisely Meyer's refusal of a such a reconciliation or hierarchy of "art" and techniques of mass production that has routinely offended his critics. "Die neue Welt" announces,

Art has an undisputed right to exist provided the speculative spirit of mankind has need of it after the graphic-colored, plastic-constructive, musical-kinetic overthrow of its philosophy of life.... The artist's studio has become a scientific and technical laboratory.... The new work of art is for all, not a collector's piece or the privilege of a single individual.... Dead is the work of art as a 'thing in itself,' as 'art for art's sake'.... And personality? The heart?? The soul??? Our plea is for absolute segregation.⁸⁴

Meyer's ruthless denunciation of art has been seen by critics as a naive positivism, an instrumentalization of architecture that implicates his work in a purely technocratic and administrative logic. But accusations based on his subordination of aesthetic autonomy to positivist instrumentality ignore, for one thing, that authorial autonomy and artistic purity was in the process of being progressively dismantled by dadaism after 1913, and constructivism and productivism right up until the time of Meyer's own work. The technological, social, and political changes that conditioned that dismantling constitute a historically irreversible reality to which Meyer was sensitive. "*The machine* is nothing more than the inexorable dictator of the possibilities and tasks common to all our lives." Such a statement should not be understood as a matter of autonomous technology, but rather the contrary, of deciding how and for whom technology is to be used and how artistic practice must correspondingly be transformed. What is more, as we have

⁸⁴Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt," trans. in Schnaidt

already seen, Meyer recognized that industrial production is not wedded to the social relations that engendered it; it could be brought into service for other forms of society.

Meyer would later elaborate his conception of a changed design practice in an essay, "Wie ich arbeite," published in *Architektura CCCP* 6.⁸⁵ In the essay Meyer stresses design as collaborative work and emphasizes how objectivity and rigid standardization — of building components, of functional spaces, of drawing formats (in the "tersely standardized form" of DIN or OCT standards, or in axonometrics showing the elements of the building in measurable relationships and "mercilessly" exposing errors of judgment) — inexorably evacuate the individual authorial subject. And in his "Über marxistische Architektur," of 1931, he further asserts thirteen points of socialist architecture, including the following:

5. The ABCs of socialist architecture in a planned economy are composed of norms, types and standards. We normalize dimensional requirements to typical space and typical equipment. We organize these typical elements as standard organic building entities for the socialist praxis of life [*socialistische Lebenpraxis*].

6. As the socialist planned economy materializes in the sphere of building, the steady diminution of the multiplicity of standard elements (equipment, building parts, spaces) is an indication of the steady socialization of mass life [*Massenlebens*]....

11. In line with the Marxist maxim that "being determines consciousness" the socialist building is a factor in mass psychology. Hence cities and their building components must be organized psychologically in keeping with the findings of a science in which psychology is kept constantly in the foreground.

⁸⁵Meyer, "Wie ich arbeite"

The individual pretensions of perceptions [*Empfindungsansprüche*] of the artist-architect must not be allowed to determine the psychological effect of the building. The elements in a building that have a telling psychological effect (poster area, loudspeaker, light dispenser, staircase, color, etc.) must be organically integrated so as to accord with our profoundest insights into the laws of perception....

13. For [the Marxist architect] architecture is not an aesthetic stimulus but a keen edged weapon in the class struggle.⁸⁶

So the point of the technical reproducibility and standardization of the Petersschule is not only a technical one. The conception of architecture as an industrial product, the insistence on design as technique rather than inspired creation, in short, the disfranchisement of the humanist demiurge to which both Lissitzky and Le Corbusier still clung, hollows out the imaginary plentitude of artistic creation and deconstructs the work of architecture into its material determinants and the social conditions of its making. The building just *is* these conditions. It is in this sense that the architecture tries to disappear, to become an aleatory effect. The Petersschule produces a *significant absence*, that is to say an absence which it at the same time *represents*. In contrast to the hermetic "silence" of the architectural sign, purified and reduced to its presumed "essence" — from Lissitzky's Prouns, to Le Corbusier's Purism, to de Stijl, to Mies's wall-as-an-independent-principle, all produced in an effort to salvage a degree of artistic resistance and independent value over against an ever encroaching commodified and instrumentalized world — the Petersschule harrasses received perceptions of

⁸⁶Hannes Meyer, "Über marxistische Architektur," MS 1931; reprinted in Meyer, Bauen und Gesellschaft; partial English translation in Schnaidt

architecture's autonomy, fullness, intrinsic value, and resistance to commodity form by presenting the building as an organization of the very reified, *sachlich* components and materials that art traditionally has seen as its duty to either block out or transfigure.

(See fig. 241.) *An architecture of non-consent.* The effect of which is estrangement, and absences of different sorts — absence of finish or refinement or closure, absence of the self-identity and independent value of the visual sign, absence of the subjective interiority of creator or viewer, absence of determinant meaning, absence of emotive depth and the myth of plentitude. Out of these absences comes the recognition that what had seemed, within conceptions of "architecture-as-such," essentially natural and given is in fact historically and socially produced, and therefore open to radical transformation. As Terry Eagleton has written,

The socialist revolution will take its poetry from the future, and since the future, much more palpably than the past, does not exist, this is as much as to say that it takes its poetry from absence. For it seems to me that the "future" of which Marx's text speaks here is not to be grasped as a utopian model to which the present must be conformed — not, in short, as a positivity — but is rather nothing less than the space into which the thrust of socialist transformation ceaselessly projects itself, the space created by that thrust.⁸⁷

With the Petersschule, as with all the Co-op work, the word *materialism* — understood as determination by the mode of production as well as a mere obsession with the stuff of building — imposes more than suggests itself. But we must extract the term from its primarily eighteenth-century Enlightenment and nineteenth-century

⁸⁷Terry Eagleton, "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative," *Social Text* 2 (1980): 75

positivist associations. Meyer's materialism is, for one thing, an attempt conceptually to overcome the division of labor.

The nine muses were long ago abducted by practical men and have stepped down again into life from their high pedestals, more humdrum and more reasonable. Their fields have been expropriated, confused and blurred. The boundaries between painting, mathematics and music can no longer be defined; and between sound and color there is only the gradual difference of oscillatory frequency. The depreciation of all works of art is indisputable, and there can be no question that the continued utilization of new and exact knowledge in their place is merely a matter of time.⁸⁸

As we have seen, within Meyer's epistemology, knowing and acting are both practices and both forms of production; knowing the world is thought together with changing the world. And the denunciation of art is itself a means of erasing boundaries between socio-cultural fields, annulling the separation between physical and mental activity, negating the distinction between worker and intellectual, and refusing the division of labor that is fundamental to bourgeois society.

But materialism is also, as I have suggested, aesthetic pleasure in its own right. In his essay "bauen" of 1928, Meyer would repeat and expand a list of materials, first announced in "Die neue Welt," now spaced out on the page so that even the graphic materiality of the words could not be missed.

⁸⁸Meyer, "Die neue Welt"

Co-op Building between Avant-Garde and Instrumentalization: The Petersschule

ferroconcrete	wire glass	aluminum
synthetic rubber	cork composition	euböolith
synthetic leather	synthetic resin	plywood
foam concrete	synthetic horn	gum elastic
wood's metal	synthetic wood	torfoleum
silicon steel	ripolin	asbestos
cold glue	viscose	acetone
cellular concrete	eternit	casein
rolled glass	goudron	trolit
xelotekt	canvas	tombak

we organize these building materials on economic principles into a constructive whole. thus the individual shape, the body of the structure, the color of the material and the texture of the surface come automatically into being and are determined by life.⁸⁹

The Petersschule is an assemblage of just such materials whose qualities, tough and impersonal, "come automatically into being." (See figs. 229, 246, 247, 249.)

The building is built on a steel framework resting on only 8 columns and with outside walls of this section: facing of chequered aluminum sheet — pumice concrete slabs — air space — kieselguhr slabs — air space — polished Eternit sheets. Fitting out [*Bautechnische Ausstattung*]: steel framed hopper-type windows, aluminum sheet doors, steel furniture, halls and stairs covered with rubber flooring.⁹⁰

By conferring specific forms on its reified materials — by purging materials of all mythical, auratic, transcendental meaning — the Petersschule transmutes them into rhetorcial form analogous to propaganda. Ordinarily one would expect some

⁸⁹Meyer, "bauen"

⁹⁰Hannes Meyer, "Projekt für die Petersschule, Basle, 1926," in Schnaidt, 17

overarching, unifying spatial or formal system that would give a fullness and presence to the various building components and materials. But the Petersschule disenfranchises the spatial and the visual as dominant categories of architectural constitution. Previous hierarchies governed by the distinction of art from objects of everyday are now dissolved by the formative principles and categories of machine production. Volumetric components are conceived in functional terms — simple adjacencies grouped according to use — which are completely independent of visual affect. And "elements that have a telling psychological effect," according to Meyer, such as the stairs, walkways, and suspended platforms, are standardized or confiscated like so many found elements, and affixed or grafted on to the basic unit of the building (figs. 247, 249). All of which operates to negate the relational compositional strategies identified with traditional art of human facture, and to substitute things untouched by personality. Each material is experienced *as such* and as infiltrating our everyday lives with the new associations of the industrial landscape.

Like the space of modernity described in "Die neue Welt", the space of the Petersschule is temporalized: we apprehend it only as we traverse it. In the Petersschule, space is a product of the disjunctive building parts and materials, the way in which they are used, and the time in which we encounter them. Where humanism, in its ceaseless effort to fill the void between ourselves and the world, forever finds ways to convert things into their images, into their names, into abstractions, into totems, Meyer intensifies the raw materiality of the thing — the glaring brightness, the hardness, the smell, the taste — and thrusts the experience of that thing, previously indifferent and unimaginably external, toward the subject with unpadding harshness.

His materialism emphasizes the heterogeneous properties of things and their effects in real space and real time, and induces a play of sensuous energies in the viewer, a compulsional pleasure taken in the quiddity of the building parts, but also in the contradictions, the disruptions, the gaps and silences, all of which explodes the received social meanings of those things. This is nothing less, I would suggest, than Bloch's utopian *desire to disorganize*. The cancelling of fixed meanings, the shattering of the illusion of individual centrality, in short, the production of absence, all organize a political metaphor: *things can be made different*. Bloch's empty space becomes *productively empty*.

So, then, there is no materiality without its flow of contradictory and disruptive signification, and no absence — of whatever sort — without a structure of presence. In the Petersschule's materialist opposition to all transcendental stabilizers of signification, which induces an experience of the world increasingly as a succession of completed material substances seemingly operating through automatic mechanisms, the viewer becomes disoriented and dislodged from conventionally secure spaces of aesthetic apprehension and tends toward the merely factual understanding and description of objective reality from which he feels estranged. But the practice of estrangement, or the production of a *Verfremdungseffekt*, if we may now use, correctly I think, that concept from Brechtian theater — the staging of action in such a way that what had seemed natural and unquestionable is now revealed as historical and thus open to revolutionary change — such production is plausible for the viewer only if a certain verisimilitude is posited. So the Petersschule can do its job of cancelling, disrupting, and decentering only if certain identities are maintained.

Traditionally, one of the devices that has insured a sense of palpable presence in a building is the understanding of the building as a transcription of the human body. In the chapter "Humanist Values" in his The Architecture of Humanism, Geoffrey Scott, sustaining observations derived from Heinrich Wöfflin, identifies two complementary principles of humanism. One is founded on our response to the appearance of stability or instability and our corporeal identification with the building itself: "*We have transcribed ourselves into terms of architecture.*"⁹¹ Another is founded on our unconscious investment of the building with human movement and human moods: "*We transcribe architecture into terms of ourselves.*"⁹² Thus Scott concludes that "architecture, to communicate the vital values of the spirit must appear organic, like the body," and declares

The scientific perception of the world is forced upon us; the humanist perception of it is ours by right. The scientific method [of criticism] is intellectually and practically useful, but the naïve, the anthropomorphic way which humanizes the world and interprets it by analogy with our own bodies and our own wills, is still the aesthetic way; it is the basis of poetry, and it is the foundation of architecture.⁹³

⁹¹Geoffrey Scott, The Architecture of Humanism (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1924 [orig. 1914]), 213; emphasis in original. See also Heinrich Wöfflin, Renaissance and Baroque, trans. K. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); and Georg Simmel, "The Aesthetic Significance of the Face," trans. Lore Ferguson, in Georg Simmel, 1858-1918, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1959 [orig. German 1901]), 276-81. For a preliminary sketch of the notion of physiognomy in architecture, see Anthony Vidler, The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), 118 ff.

⁹²Scott, 213

⁹³Ibid., 218

But such inscription of the body is, of course, never innocent. And so, for example, in the monumentalized modernism of at least some of the Italian rationalists, syntactical and typological invention within a classicizing, anthropomorphizing conceptual frame becomes the basis for reconnecting the architectural sign with its affirmative cultural and disciplinary conventions, now in service of the fascist State. Giuseppe Pagano, Marcello Piacentini, Ludovico Quaroni, and others assimilate the critical analytical and negational tendencies of modernism, reconnect the architectural sign to the referential realm, and demonstrate the availability of seemingly autonomous or critical formal manipulations for institutionalized and domesticated ends. A synthesis of formal abstraction with a conception of spatial order and harmony derived from classical proportional systems serves in the buildings of these architects merely to prop up the myth of cultural continuity and progress, as if their monumentality and awe-inspiring physical presence were in compensation for a seemingly unchangeable status quo.⁹⁴

On the other hand, expressionist architecture renovates the body and the phenomenology of its representation as orientation points that might prove resistant to the uncritical, potentially instrumentalizing tendencies of industrialized architecture. And yet, in a society where objects appear as alienated and cut off from human purposes, this, too, is a consoling doctrine: the world is grasped in relation to *me*, as a

⁹⁴I have not been entirely careful here in my criticism of these architects. For a more balanced and nuanced analysis of the problematic of Italian modern architecture, the state, and the regime, see Giorgio Ciucci, "Pagano und Terragni: Faschistische Architektur als Ideal und als Staatsstil," in Hartmut Frank, ed., *Faschistische Architekturen: Planen und Bauen in Europa 1930 bis 1945* (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1985), 123-38; and "Italian Architecture during the Fascist Period: The Many Souls of the Classical," *The Harvard Architecture Review* 6 (1987): 76-87.

correlate of *my* body and *my* consciousness, and this is reassuring; it restores the individual subject, which the technological avant-garde sought to liquidate, to its rightful throne, seen as the source and origin of all meaning.

We can theorize this latter proposition using Jacques Lacan's metaphor of the mirror image of the subject: If we imagine with Lacan a small child contemplating itself in a mirror — Lacan's "mirror stage" — we can see how the child's first development of an ego, of an integrated self-image, is constructed as an imaginary state of being. The child finds reflected back to itself in the mirror a gratifyingly unified image of itself that resolves its prior "morcelated body." The identification with an image of one's self is constitutive of that self, and this constitution is the structural precondition for any ideological manipulation or massage of the subject. As the mirror situation suggests, this self is essentially narcissistic: we arrive at a sense of selfhood by finding a favorable image of ourselves reflected back to ourselves by some object. For Lacan, the ego is just this narcissistic process whereby we construct a fiction of unitary selfhood by finding some externality with which we can identify.⁹⁵

Architecture based on the human body similarly lures the ego by offering an image of its mirror-self, a kind of mirroring object. This is a condition that expressionism at once exemplifies and problematizes. In the buildings of Hans Poelzig or Eric Mendelsohn, for example, the viewer encounters an architecture now overtly anthropomorphic but not quite human. We see not so much a reflection of ourselves as a shadow or a distortion, an image that disturbs the narcissistic gaze of the viewer

⁹⁵See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

through what Lacan called an "inmixing of Otherness," presenting itself as *other* to our body and our subjectivity. The differential play between subject and object that takes place along the axis of the viewer and his reflection in the mirror metaphor now finds its analogue in the object itself; the object takes on subjective attributes. Like the animals in a fable who speak with human voices, expressionist objects are the obverse of classical humanist representations — that is, they do not render to us our narcissistic object of desire so directly — but they, nonetheless, restore the individual subjectivity that modernity threatened to displace, in objects that can be seen as parables of a privileged because private psychological moment.

Whatever the strengths or weaknesses of these positions to which we might compare that of Meyer, all imply an attempt to restore the symbolic authenticity of traditional content or individual authorship, an attempt to re-bound architecture, to re-colonize it within humanist conceptions of cultural institutions, functionality, and individuality. The Petersschule, in contrast, inverts the signs of the body in ways that extend similar inversions in Le Corbusier's *Maison Citrohan* — the base of the building is nullified, the roof of the building is occupiable (fig. 248), the elevational and volumetric organizations interdict visual frontality and the search for human countenance (figs. 229, 247). But what is more important is that the threat of dissolution, which Le Corbusier and expressionism conceptualize in terms of the body, is converted by the Petersschule into a treat of dissolution of that different entity, whose construction on the model of the body image is designated by Lacan's mirror stage: *the*

subject, the personality, the individual itself.⁹⁶ And it is not difficult to associate this threat of dissolution, which stuns the psychological subject into a recognition of ideological-material mechanisms as its causes, with the mixture of anguish and exhilaration, of pain and compulsion, that we have described as Meyer's materialist pleasure.

The structure of presence in the Petersschule also involves, as we have seen, considerations of the advancement of technology, and the links between the transformations of technology and the transformations of artistic practice and social forms. But it further involves the city, the physical and social context into which the Petersschule irrupts. The site of the Petersschule lies on the eastern periphery of the inner city wall, a former Roman fortification, adjacent to the Peterskirche (figs. 230, 245).⁹⁷ Meyer's project isolates itself on the site, holding the street line to the west and leaving over half of the eastern part of the site free on the ground plane. The entry, which is an extended spatial and temporal sequence through the system of open and glazed stairs, begins at the western street, visible from the square in front of the church, and wraps around the north side of the building. The passageway formed by the the *Freiflächen*, or suspended platforms on the north of the building, operate like an upper-level loggia in concert with the deep entry door to the first level and the large window of the ground level (fig. 229) to describe a zone of circulation at the northern edge of the site which extends the space of the narrow passage that enters the site from the east

⁹⁶I borrow this formulation from Fredrich Jameson, "Pleasure: A Political Issue," in Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory. Essays 1971-1986*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 71-72.

⁹⁷O. Birkner, J. Herzog, and P. DeMeuron, "Die Peterschule in Basel (1926-1929)," *Werk/Archithese* 13-14 (January-February 1978)

and continues parallel to the south facade of Peterskirche (fig. 245), all of which further sponsors the preeminence of the diagonality so apparent in the perspective and axonometric drawings.⁹⁸ The vertical organization of the building (fig. 248) is also determined by the *Freiflächen* which Meyer proposed in substitution for the playground required by the building program: the ground level is left open for public circulation and parking; only the gymnasium, swimming pool, and kitchen are located at ground level or below; and the whole implies a reorganization of functions and spaces extending out into the traditional urban fabric.

Meyer writes, "The school itself is raised as far as possible above ground to a level where there is sunlight and fresh air... and all the flat roofs of the building are assigned to the children for recreation, providing a total area of 1250 sq. meters of sunny space away from the old town." The emphasis of these last lines on the salutary vocation of architecture, conjoined with and enabled by its technical advancement, is standard modernist fare, but what I wish to draw attention to, one last time, is the unexpected fit between the Petersschule and Bloch's description of "building in empty spaces": "Today, in many places, houses look as if they were ready to travel.... Their interior is bright and sterile like hospital rooms, the exterior looks like boxes on top of mobile poles, but also like ships. They have flat decks, portholes, gangways, railings..., and as ships they like to disappear." On the one hand, as we have seen, Meyer's materialism seeks to *dissolve the Petersschule as a purely visual object*. And on the other hand, the flying decks of the Petersschule — perhaps even more intensely

⁹⁸It is of interest to compare this upper level loggia to the more conventional interpretation of a loggia in the Petersschule project by Hans Schmidt. Such a comparison serves to confirm the spatial reading of Meyer's extruded circulation system.

than the earlier projects of Ladovsky's studio, or Lissitzky's project for a "Horizontal Skyscraper" of 1923-25 — organize a constructional metaphor that struggles to distantiate and extract the building from its context, to enunciate a conception of space that is *other* than the one we have. The building is "ready to travel," provided we understand by that statement not only that the building is a visual metaphor, but also that the building is the *actual* production of a *concept* of an alternative space. We should link the metaphor of the platforms and the group of children engaged in Pestalozzian learning with other images like those which appeared in the pages of ABC — the planetarium construction, Lyubov' Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin's propaganda apparatus, and Lissitzky's Lenin Tribune project in ABC 1 (fig. 251), the circus tent and amusement park ride in ABC 4 (fig. 250) — all of which attempt to *figure* the various city-machines conjoined with mass society in signs of collective participation within the spectacle of modernization.

Looking at the asymmetry of the *Freiflächen* grafted onto the functional volume of the school, one is also reminded of the poignant image of Paul Klee's "Hero with the Wing" (fig. 252), and of Klee's diary entry,

Today is the great transition from past to present. In the huge pit of forms there lies rubble to which one still clings in part. It furnishes the stuff for abstraction. A rubble field of spurious elements, for the formation of impure crystals.

That is how it is today...

In order to work myself out of my rubble, I had to fly.

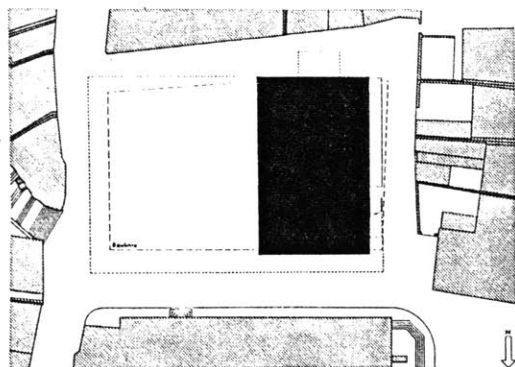
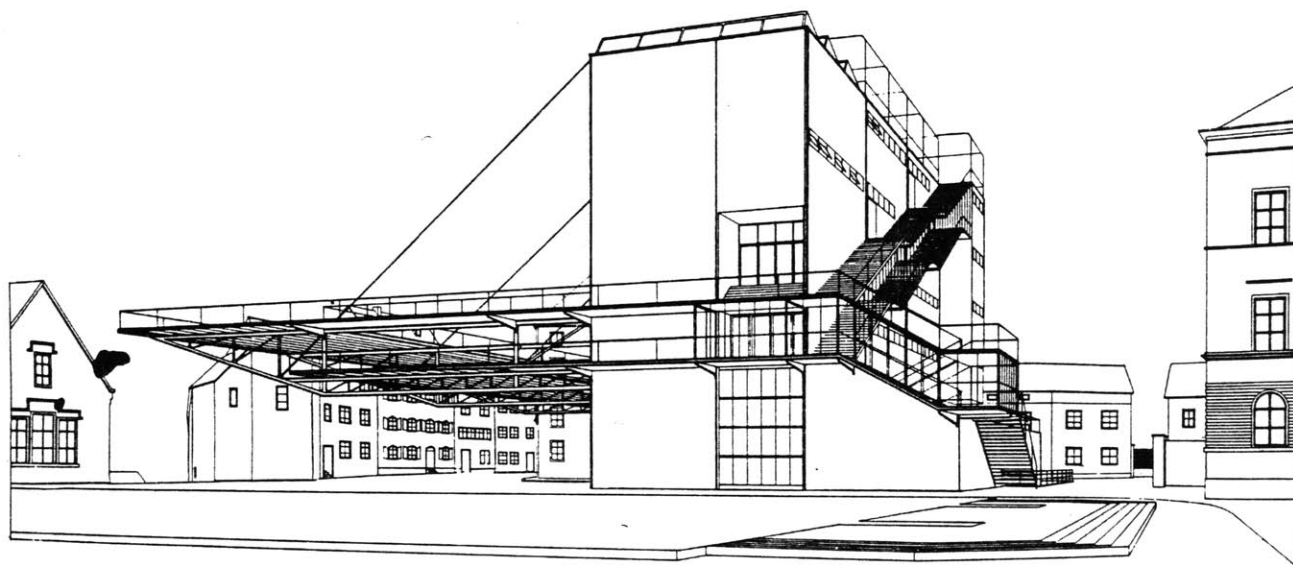
And I did fly. In that shattered world I remain only in memory, as one thinks back sometimes.

Thus I am "abstract with memories."⁹⁹

Like an enormous prosthetic device for a city that is unable to function adequately on its own, the Petersschule organizes its elements in such a way as to reveal the present order as crippled and unsatisfactory, physically and socially, and to propose an anti-social response as a possible way out: the Petersschule would *like to disappear*.

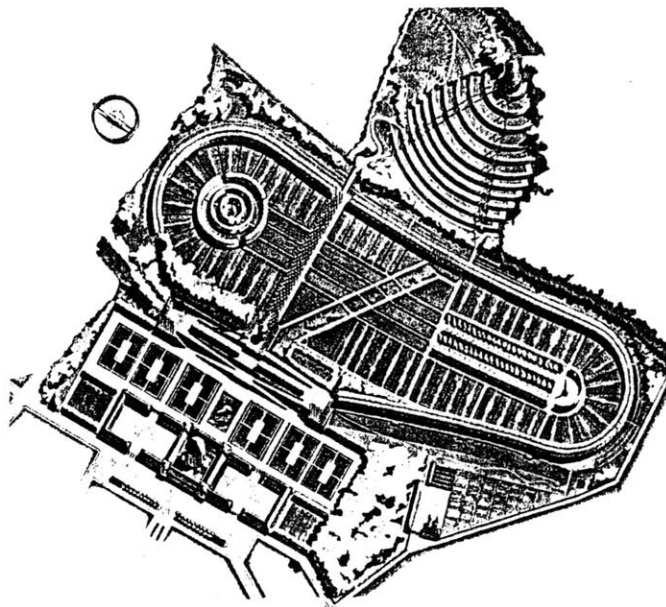
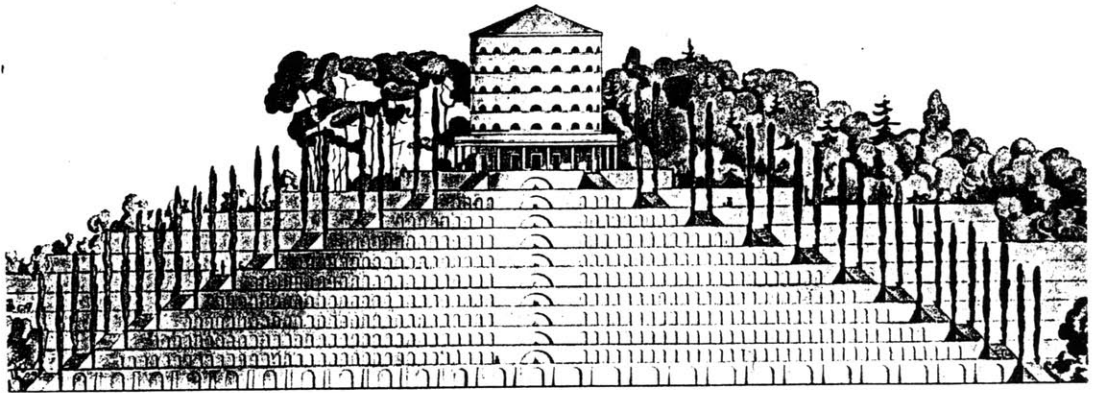
⁹⁹Paul Klee, Tagebücher, ed. Felix Klee (Cologne, 1957), 323 ff. The diary entry is from 1915. For a discussion, see O. K. Werkmeister, "Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee, and the Angel of History," Oppositions 25 (Fall 1982): 102-25

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule

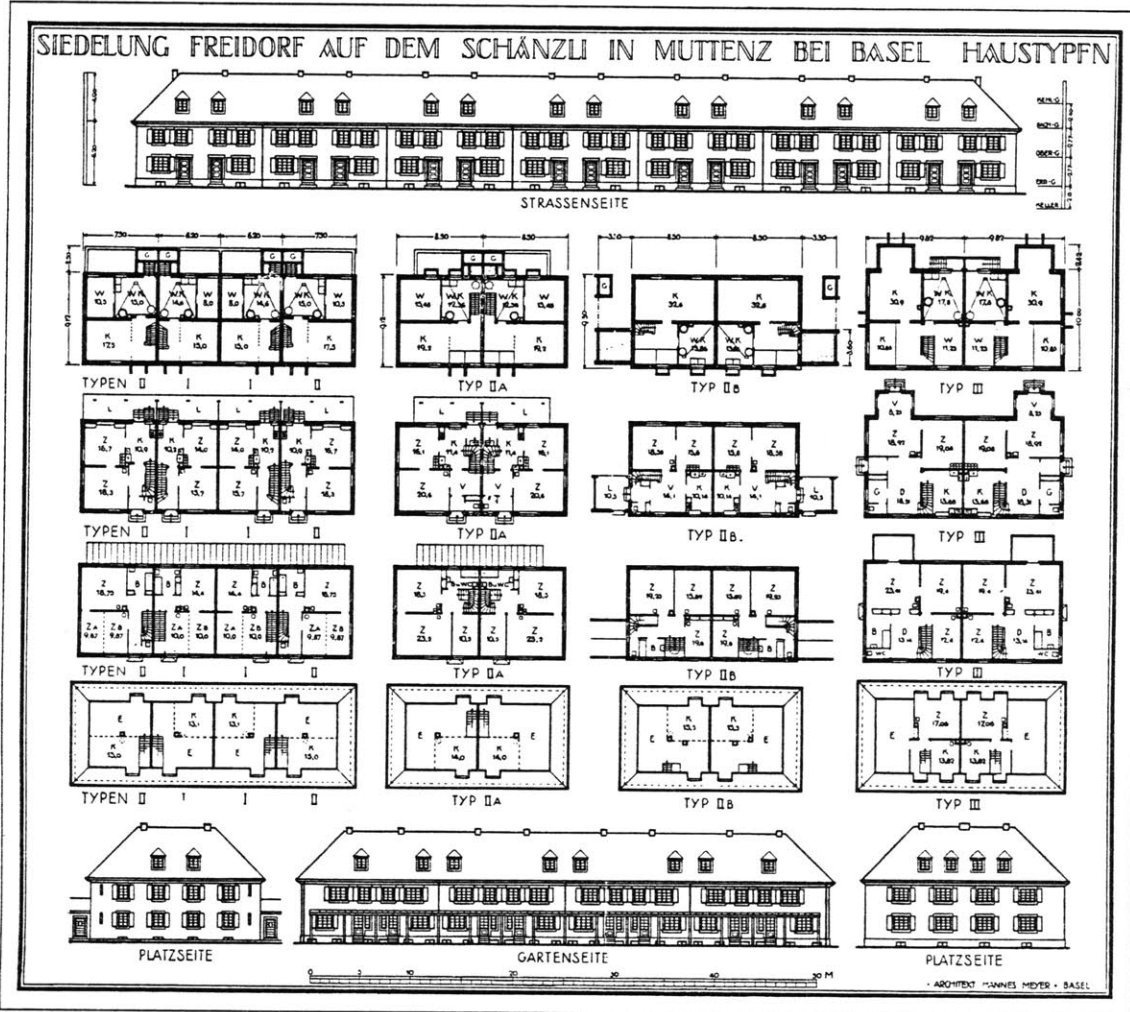


229. Hannes Meyer, project for the Petersschule, Basel, 1926, perspective
230. Petersschule, site plan

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule



231. Meyer, project for the central cemetery, Basel, 1923, elevational view of the urn grove and the columbarium
232. Central cemetery, aerial perspective of the site

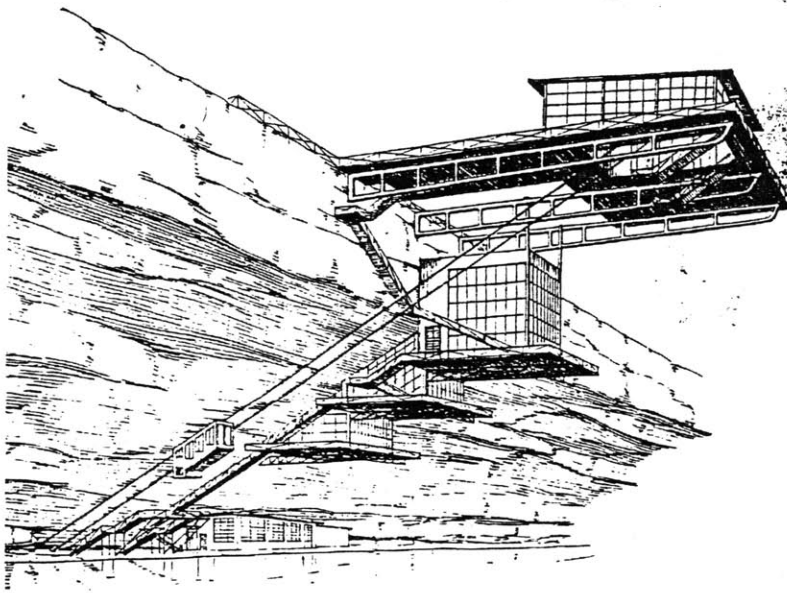
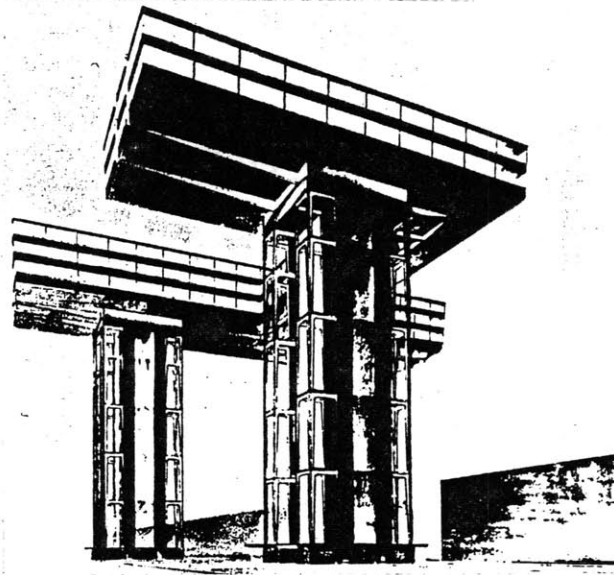


236. Freidorf Siedlung, house types, plans and elevations

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule

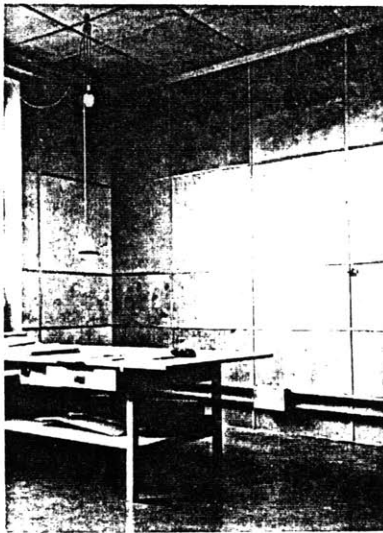
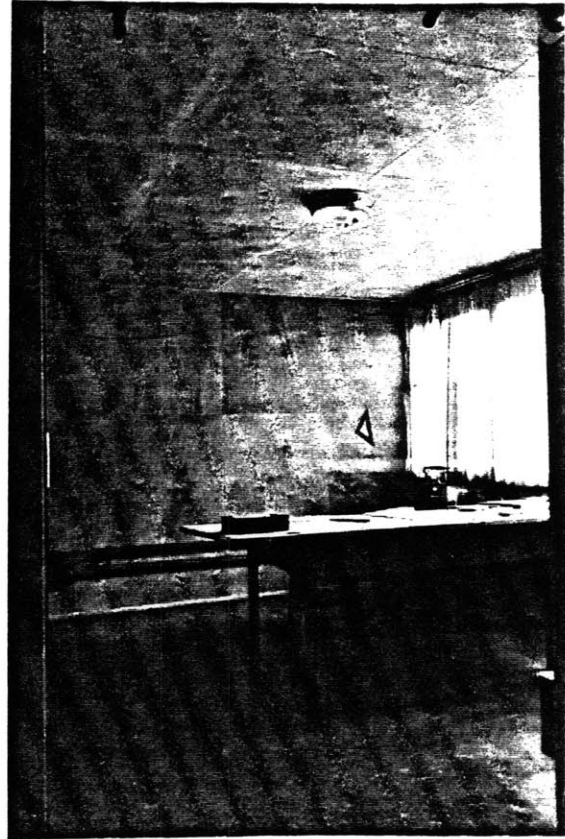
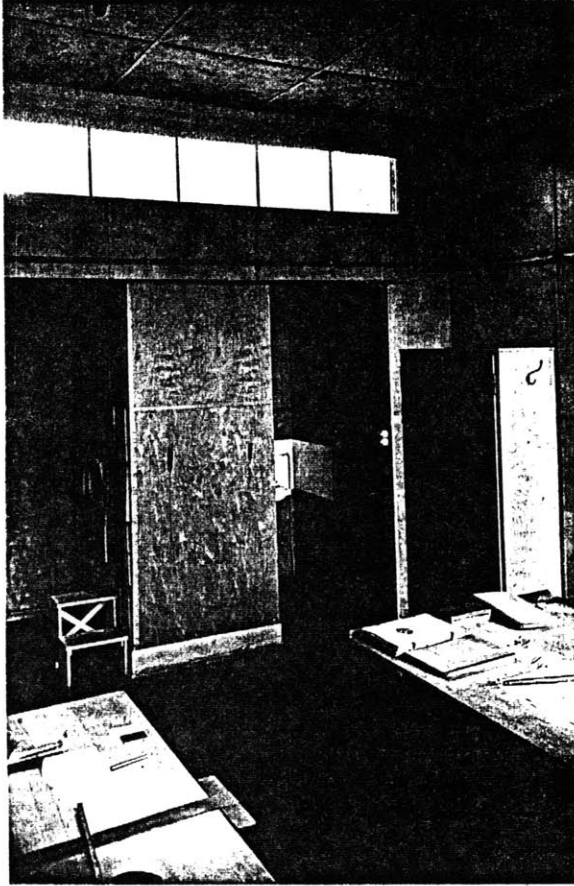


237. Freidorf Siedlung, views



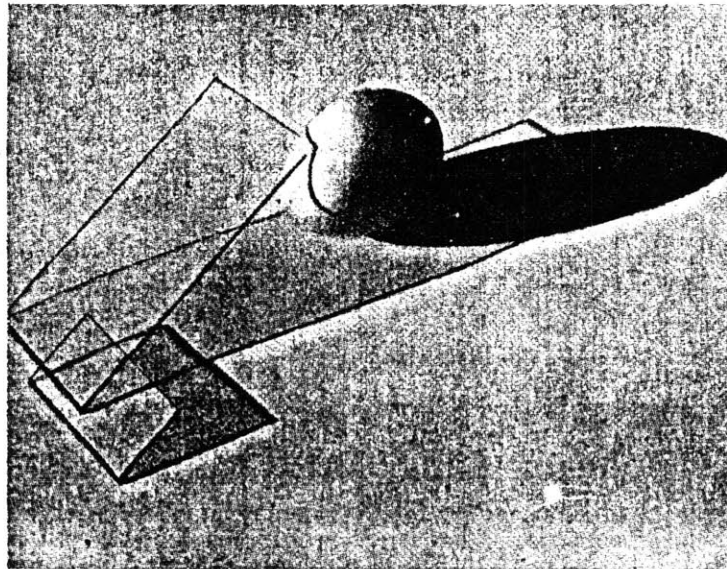
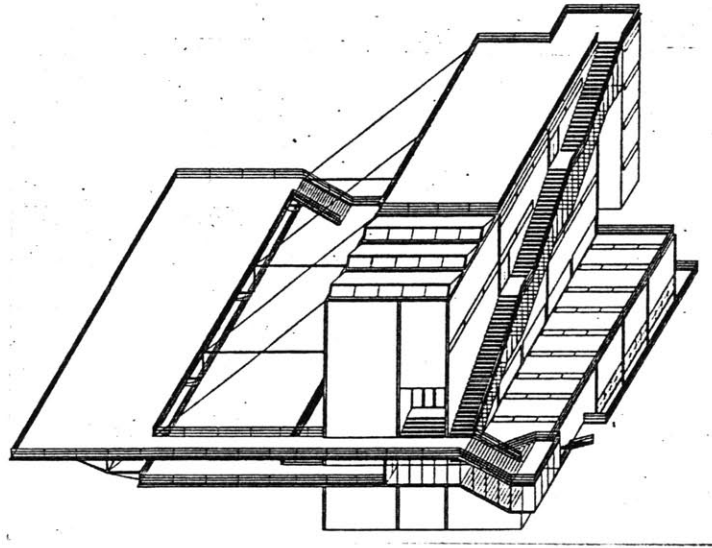
238. El Lissitzky, project for a
Wolkenbügelhochhauses for Moscow, 1925
239. Vkhutemas (N. A. Ludovsky's
studio), project of a restaurant suspended
from a cliff over the sea, 1922-23

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule



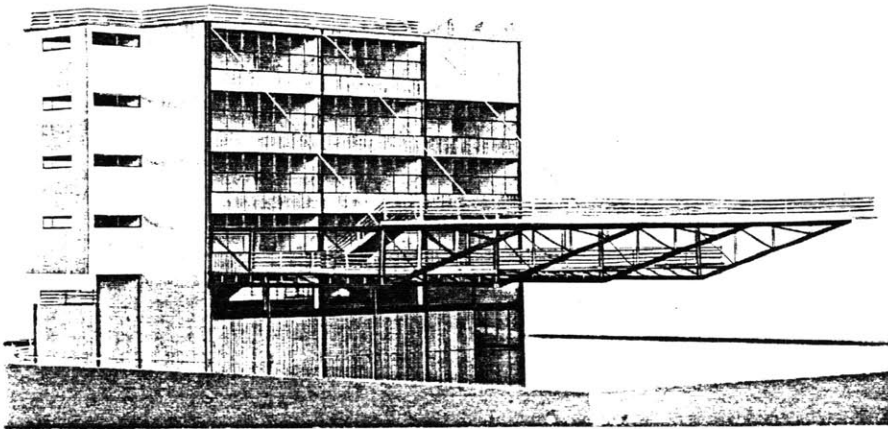
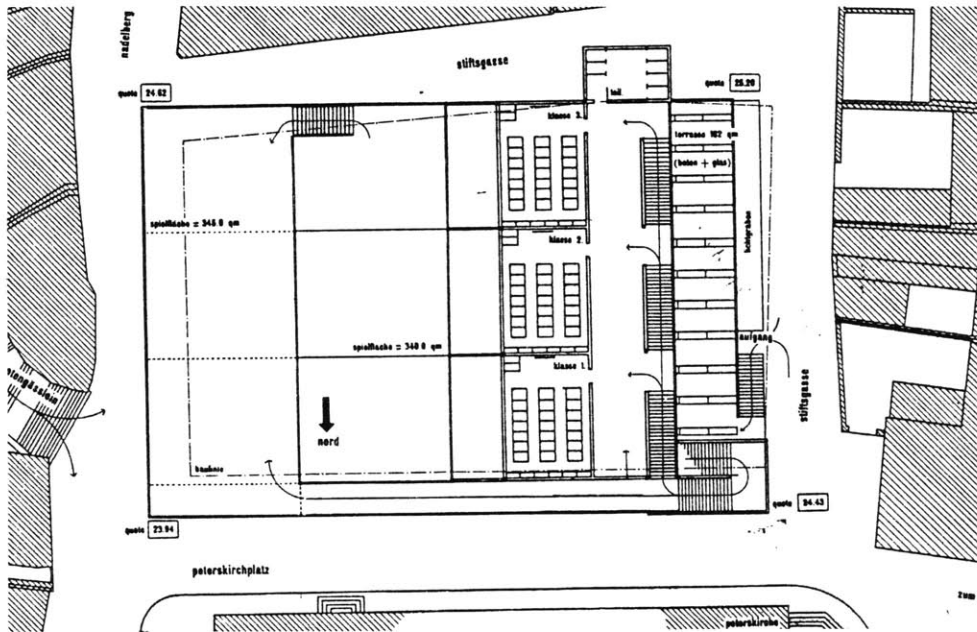
240. Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer, architects' office, Basel, c. 1926

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule



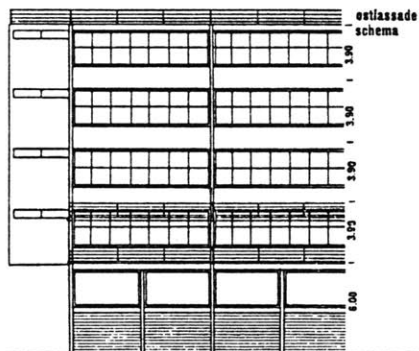
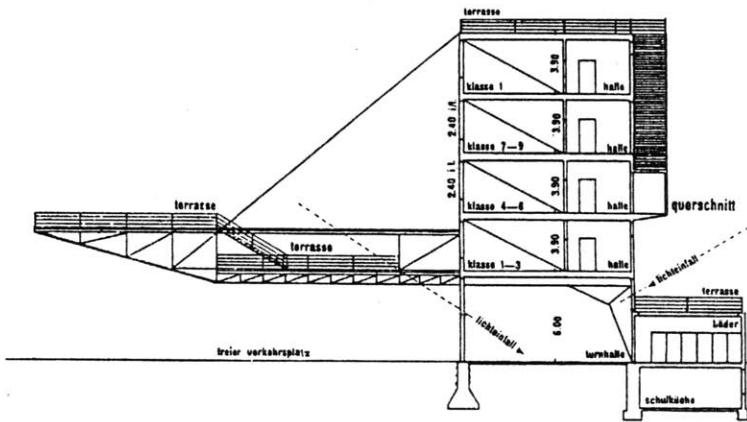
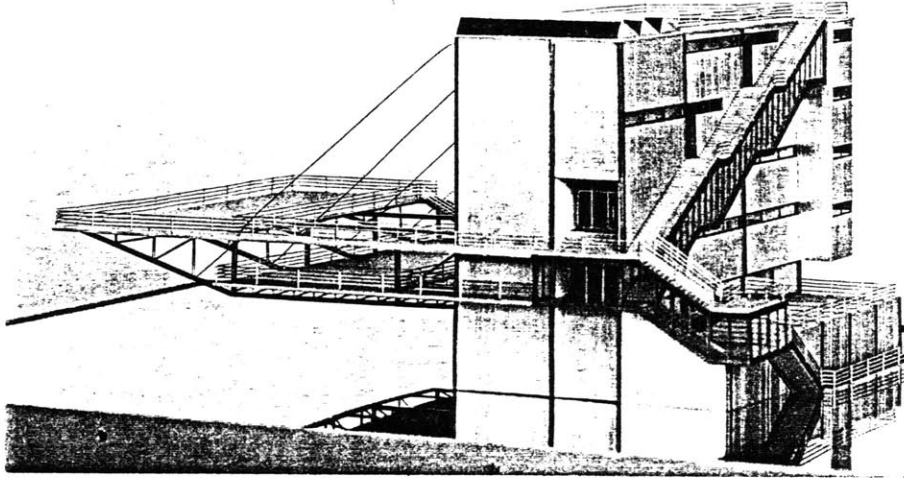
- 243. Petersschule, isometric
- 244. Meyer, Co-op Construction I, 1926

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule



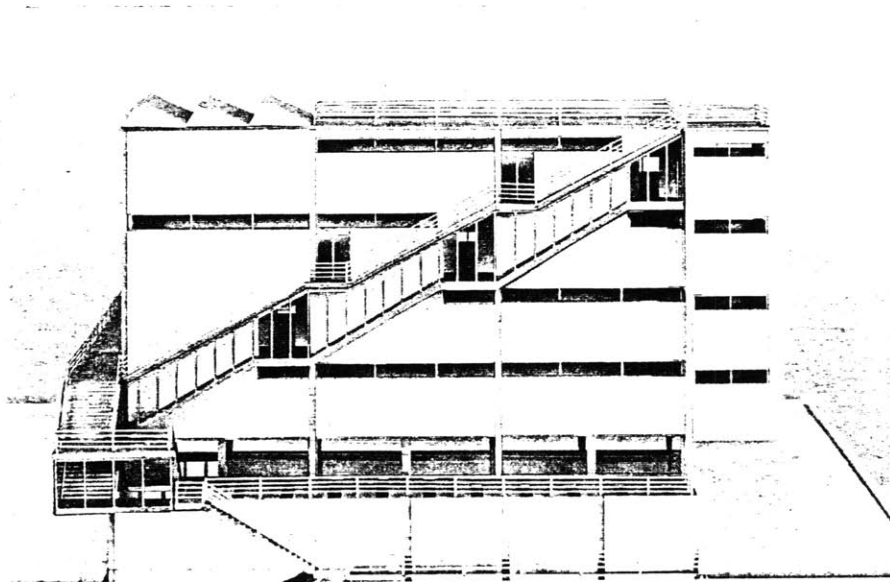
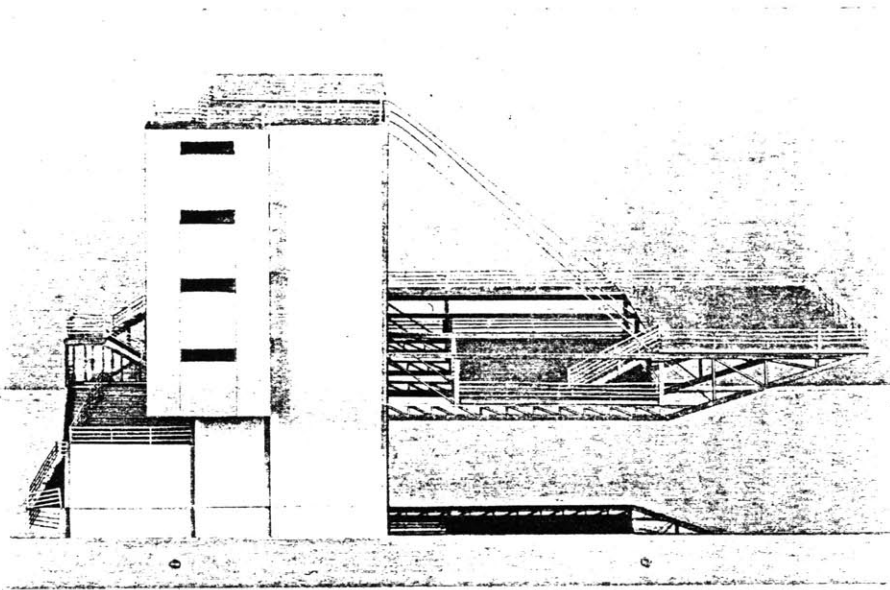
245. Petersschule, plan
246. Petersschule, view of model
(constructed for 1989 exhibition)

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule

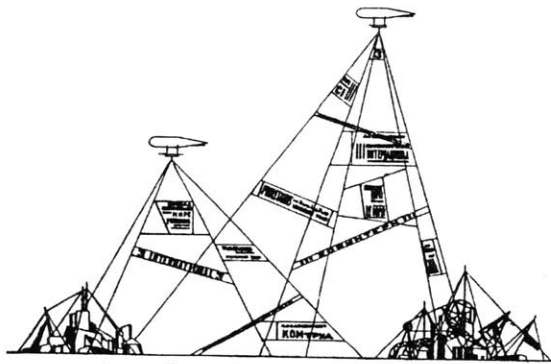
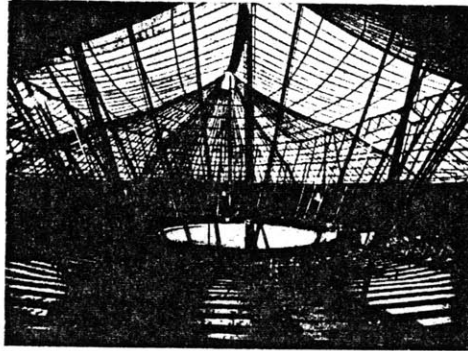


247. Petersschule, view of model
 248. Petersschule, section and partial elevation

Co-op Building between Avant-garde and Instrumentalization: the Petersschule

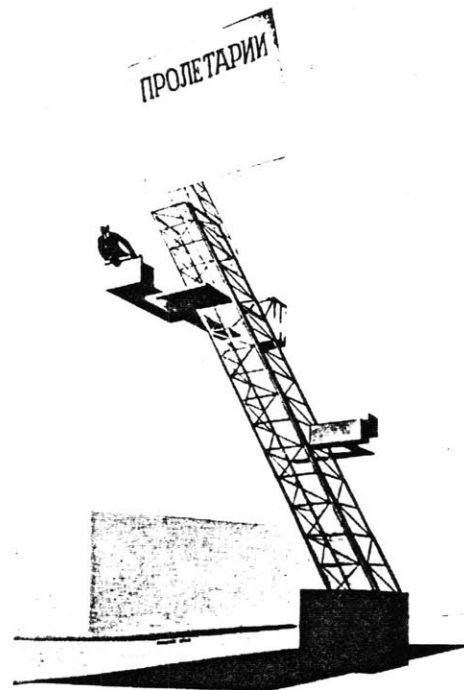


249. Petersschule, views of model



L. POPOVA UND A. VESNINE

FLIEGENDE PROPAGANDA.



250. Illustrations of a circus tent and amusement park ride, from ABC 4 (second series), 1927-28

251. Illustrations of El Lissitzky's Lenin Tribune, the dome of the Zeiss Planetarium in Jena, and Lyubov' Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin's propadanda apparatus, from ABC 1 (second series), 1926



252. Paul Klee, Hero with the Wing, etching, 1905

The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building

the Dessau Bauhaus is not an artistic,
but a social phenomenon.

as *gestalter*

our activities are determined by society,
and the scope of our tasks is set by society.

Does not our present society in Germany call for
thousands of people's schools, people's parks, people's houses?
millions of pieces of people's furniture???

(What are the connoisseur's gibberings worth when set against these)

(And the cubistic cubes of Bauhaus *sachlichkeit*?)...

the new Bauhaus school

as a center of education in shaping life

makes no selection of the gifted.

it despises

the imitative intellectual mobility of talent,

it is alive to the danger of intellectual schism:

inbreeding, egocentrism, unworldliness, aloofness.

the new *building* school....¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Hannes Meyer, "Bauhaus and Society," 1929, in Schnaidt, Hannes Meyer. Original is written in lower case; my emphasis.

With this tough and exact rhetoric, Hannes Meyer addressed the representatives of the student body of the Bauhaus on the occasion of his appointment to the post of director in February 1928. It is the sort of rhetoric that has prompted critics and historians to label him functionalist, naive radical, petty-bourgeois, and "gravedigger" of the Bauhaus.¹⁰¹ Within the context of the analysis here, however, we will understand the rhetoric to be indicative of Meyer's task to bring into the Bauhaus the related theories of aesthetic practice as social production and the aesthetic object as an image of the productive cycle, now with the concomitant hope of an actual intervention into the organizational processes of that cycle. At the Bauhaus, Meyer attempts to carry through his previous research in the performativity of form to the radicalization of the process of building itself. He thereby pushes the hypothesis of an engaged architecture to a limit unknown at the Bauhaus during the time of Walter Gropius's administration. As most critics have recognized, such a radicalization is manifest as a substantial accentuation in the school of social, technical, and practical aspects of architecture, a search for a more concrete and practical role for the school in the actual production and distribution of its designs, and a diminution of the importance of studies of form and self expression, the effect of which is the overturning of some of the most engrained and cherished pedagogic principles of the Bauhaus tradition. What critics have not seemed willing to admit is that the insertion of Meyer's radical hypotheses into the

¹⁰¹Walter Gropius, who has set the tone for most subsequent criticisms of Meyer's work at the Bauhaus, condemns Meyer in a letter to Tomás Maldonado: "I cannot allot to [Meyer] the importance with which you credit him during the years of the Bauhaus. His strategy and tactics were too petty; he was a radical petit bourgeois. His philosophy culminates in the assertion that 'life is oxygen plus sugar plus starch plus protein,' to which Mies promptly retorted: 'Try stirring all that together; it stinks.'" Publisher's epilogue, Schnaidt, 123

tradition of the Bauhaus resulted in anything other than a story of futility, nay-saying, and waste within the "venerable" school.¹⁰²

A few critics recently have attempted to confront the general problematic of the social engagement of architecture. Michael Müller, for one, in Architektur und Avantgarde¹⁰³ follows Peter Bürger's Theory of the Avant-Garde in supporting a definitional distinction to be made between those modern artistic practices based primarily on issues of form and those, like Meyer's work at the Bauhaus, that incorporate problems of the relationship between art and the socio-institutional lifeworld. Such a distinction goes some way toward breaking up the notion of a monolithic "modern movement," but it is still not fine enough to aid us here. For by arguing a definition of the avant-garde that embraces socio-political themes and practical, utilitarian concerns, Bürger and Müller can set such a practice against nineteenth-century bourgeois aestheticism and its ongoing transformations in the twentieth-century, but cannot then adequately differentiate an altogether different avant-garde of the twentieth century, which would indeed become a dominant stance: the one perhaps best exemplified by Gropius's lifelong concern with a policy of reconciliation

¹⁰²Almost every commentator on the Bauhaus follows this pattern, if they do not ignore Meyer altogether. A recent and claimed "reassessment" is one of the most balanced criticisms: "Since Meyer aroused so much controversy, on ideological as well as personal and political grounds during his two years as director of the school, it is not easy to evaluate his achievements there. There is no doubt that his policies were successful on a practical level, and that under his direction the workshops produced designs in keeping with the requirements of German industry and the domestic market: the Bauhaus did, in fact, become a competent "trade school," with, at last, an active architecture department. His design theory at that time, however, was so totally materialistic and reductionist that it is difficult to take it seriously; nevertheless he identified and challenged some of the uneasy assumptions about radicalism in design on which teaching at the school was based. He was politically aware, although not politically astute, and he was prepared to sacrifice the school for his convictions." Gillian Naylor, The Bauhaus Reassessed (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985), 174

¹⁰³Michael Müller, Architektur und Avantgarde (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1984)

between the common formal language of the avant-gardes, the social and technological research of production art, and the consistent endeavor to preserve the traditional, institutional autonomy of the artist.

Shifting from the earlier position of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, which in 1919 in Berlin had affirmed that "the political revolution must be used to liberate art from decades of regimentation," and that "art and people must form a unity,"¹⁰⁴ Gropius at the Bauhaus increasingly demonstrated a detachment from political reality, an equivocation about the role of intellectual labor, and a synthesizing, conciliatory tendency summarized in the new slogan of 1923, "Art and Technology — a New Unity," all of which ultimately amounted to little more than a proposition for a technological aesthetic or style organized and operated by artists from above. As Francesco Dal Co has argued, in what is still the primary critical comparison between the Bauhaus of Gropius and that of Meyer,

The fundamental contradiction hidden in the work of Gropius becomes clear when we underline the evident mystification into which those fall who want to credit Gropius with having conducted a "heroic battle" for the unification of the work of intellectual design (*progettazione*), for the overcoming of the division between art and the world, between art and work, between art and society; definitively, that is, for overcoming the principle of the division of labor as the fundamental structure of bourgeois society.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴Arbeitsrat für Kunst circular, translated in Ulrich Conrads, Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 44

¹⁰⁵Francesco Dal Co, "Hannes Meyer e la 'venerabile scuola di Dessau'," introduction to Hannes Meyer, Architettura o rivoluzione (Padua: Marsilio, 1973); my translation

Gropius's Bauhaus can be understood as a confirmation and verification of the evolution of the modernist paradigm as the latter has been constructed by Dal Co, Manfredo Tafuri, and the Venice School. In their construction (which follows to a certain extent the thought of the Frankfurt School of critical theory) the loss of traditional artistic values — a loss that the radical avant-gardes refused to lament — was the sign inside art of a wider cultural decomposition. Avant-garde experiments between 1919 and 1930 were an attempt to capture the lack of consistent and repeatable meanings in the culture, to register it, and make it over into form. The endeavors to picture an alternative reality, one that must perforce be irrational given the logic of the present, clarify the historical aim of the various avant-garde ideological formulations to have been the wish to accept contradiction, *to make contradiction the very object of art* — through irony or disgust, through the registration and intensification of given conditions, through chance and irrationality, even through the annulment of art itself. This process of continually activating and making "operative" the contradictions of the real — presenting art as the dialectical negation of what is given in the present — is, for the Venice School, the historical factor that unites the experience of all the progressive and radical art of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ The historical destiny of the Bauhaus can

¹⁰⁶Dal Co notes that, when Tristan Tzara affirms that the informing principle of his dadaist project "is not art but disgust," and that "every pictorial or plastic art is useless," Tzara articulates a disenchantment of the present world which leads to the discovery of the structural inadequacy of this world's art. Then there comes the search for that "irrational order" Jean Arp speaks about, whose "irrationality" is determined solely by the relationship with the contingent, an order that, inasmuch as it is irrational with respect to the given historical conditions, is intended as a possible alternative to what Arp called "this sad tale of humanity." This search for an existence that is elsewhere, that is other, for a condition reachable "through a way entirely other than a reasonable way" was also, Dal Co further contends, the aim of the first surrealist manifesto of Breton. See also Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987 [orig. Italian, 1980]).

then be seen within this paradigm as an ideological tendency to convert negativity into a positive force by discovering "the Plan" for the real — a program for social development, an overarching order for modernity — and attempting to realize that plan, to *produce* that form of reality which the avant-gardes had been able only to envision.

But Gropius, and with him the Bauhaus up to 1928, will never resolve this contradiction intrinsic to intellectual work; the demand and the ideological prefiguration of the program and of the plan on a general social level, if it is, on the one hand, the ultimate aspiration of bourgeois art, it is, on the other hand, also its extreme ideological product; *it is*, therefore, the last possibility of the survival of art; art now becomes a *directly* social function and as such annuls its own intrinsic values to become annexed itself, as value and function of society. In the practice of [Gropius's] Bauhaus, however, all this remains largely unrealized. It is a present but constantly refused destiny.¹⁰⁷

For Gropius the condition for the new "unification" of art and life remains the fact that the process of design is a process of creating an *eidetic image* — a mental image of a new art, vivid and detailed, but disengaged — which is to say, design remains intellectual work as such and only. Reading Gropius's early writings, in particular the Bauhaus program of 1919, and looking at the work of the Bäuhauslers after 1923, it seems right to affirm a relationship to, and a notable influence of, the radical artistic movements on the organization and subsequent development of the school. The Bauhaus was, in Manfredo Tafuri's words, "the decantation chamber, the refinery, of the European avant-gardes... and the ideological symbol of the unity of the

¹⁰⁷Dal Co, "Hannes Meyer e la 'venerabile scuola di Dessau'," 43

modern movement as a whole."¹⁰⁸ Accepting the weight of this tradition, Gropius, however, shows his willingness to endorse the formal experiments of the avant-gardes but to change their social role and meaning at the same time, by transferring the critical negational strategies of the immediate post-war period to an affirmative, operative level. This transference signalled a break not only with the anti-art and often destructive activities of the dadaists, but also with the proposals of the Novembergruppe, the constructivists, and the productivists for a more concretely engaged architecture.¹⁰⁹ Gropius sought to defuse the protopolitical mechanisms of radical art, demonstrate their availability for use in mediating between crafts and industry, and raise artisanal work to a new level through the application of the formal research of the avant-garde, thereby reestablishing contacts with the tenets of the Werkbund and weaving emergent artistic experiments into the fabric of the bourgeois aesthetic tradition. He makes these themes explicit in 1926.

[Industry and the crafts] are constantly getting closer to each other. The crafts of the past have changed, and future crafts will be merged in a new productive unity in which they will carry out the experimental work for industrial production. Speculative experiments in laboratory workshops will yield models and prototypes for productive implementation in factories.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 132

¹⁰⁹The contact with neo-plasticist and constructivist experiences become fully evident in the project of 1926 by Georg Muche and Richard Paulick for a steel house, in the analytic experiments by Moholy-Nagy, in the graphics of Herbert Bayer, and in the furniture by Marcel Breuer.

¹¹⁰Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus Dessau — Principles of Bauhaus Production," 1926; translated in *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939* ed. Tim and Charlotte Benton (London: The Open University Press, 1975), 149

It is symptomatic that in these terms Gropius is so impressed with the example of Moholy-Nagy, who in 1922 had shown at the Der Sturm gallery in Berlin a series of paintings produced by dictating instructions for the making of the pictures over the telephone "to a head of a coat-of-arms shop." Moholy writes:

In 1922 I ordered by telephone from a sign factory five paintings in porcelain enamel. I had the factory's color chart before me and I sketched my paintings on graph paper. At the other end of the telephone the factory supervisor had the same kind of paper, divided into squares. He took down the dictated shapes in the correct position.¹¹¹

As a simple metaphor for a supposed overcoming of the distance between art and life that would then be realized practically by Gropius in the Bauhaus, this anecdote shows how remote design in fact could remain, and how far the Bauhaus ideology in fact was from a real overcoming of the division of labor, from a real synthesis of art and life. The sense of Moholy's anecdote is different from the seemingly similar anonymous text of 1924, published by Hans Arp and El Lissitzky in Kunstismen:

With the increasing frequency of the square in painting, the art institutions have offered everybody the means to make art. Now the production of art has been simplified to such an extent that one can do no better than order one's paintings by telephone from a house painter while one is lying in bed.¹¹²

¹¹¹Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, in Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969)

¹¹²The author of the text is either El Lissitzky or Malevich. It was originally published in Hans Arp and El Lissitzky, Kunstismen (Munich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1925), ix-x. For a discussion, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Malevich, le carré, le degré zéro," Macula, 1 (1978): 28-49.

In contrast to the latter text, which implies a renunciation of the traditional role of the individual artist and his specialized vision, in Moholy's text, art is still transcendental and mystified; art tries to control, in its own institutional terms, what Walter Benjamin called the presence of the "technological accident." In a comparison of the painter and the cameraman through the analogy of the magician and the surgeon, which provides the terms for a comparison of Gropius and Meyer, Benjamin writes,

The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs.¹¹³

Along these same lines, Dal Co argues that another example of Gropius's conservative vision of the role of art in society lies in the facts of the transfer of the Bauhaus from Weimar to Dessau. After the announcement of the proposed transfer from Weimar, several German cities offered to host the Bauhaus, including Frankfurt, Hagen, Mannheim, and Darmstadt. In support of his choice of Dessau, Gropius cites some motivations that are revealing for an understanding of his vision of the architect's role. He says that he prefers a direct relationship with the "dynamic" Burgermeister Hesse¹¹⁴, whose "courage" and "spirit of initiative" he praises, inasmuch as this allows

¹¹³Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), 233

¹¹⁴Hesse would later oust Meyer from the Bauhaus. See Hannes Meyer, "My Dismissal from the Bauhaus" (1930), an open letter to Oberbürgermeister Hesse, in Schnaidt.

him to remain sufficiently outside the political problems that the settlement of the Bauhaus in other cities would have stirred up. Nor is this just an indication of a wish to preserve the autonomy of the school. The refusal to transfer the Bauhaus to Frankfurt, for example, if it can be partly justified for reasons of economic convenience and the possible affiliation with big industry, is also dictated, as Dal Co argues, by a fundamental political choice: Gropius wanted to avoid a confrontation with that experience and that attempt of an overall management of the city with which the most advanced architects of German social democracy were experimenting and which in Frankfurt, with the work of Ernst May, had its most evident success. Gropius in effect demonstrates that he does not wish to take part in the possibility of an architectural intervention in the general problems of the city, and he refuses to submit himself and the Bauhaus to those political conditions that alone would have allowed for that greater merging of art and life that he continued to invoke rhetorically. He preferred instead to safeguard his own limited autonomy as an artist. The potential for effective intervention realized by May, Gropius entrusted to the "courage" of the political forces, *status quo*. The history of Gropius's Bauhaus, I would assert polemically, is a history of such compromises.

Upon Meyer's appointment as director of the Bauhaus, Oskar Schlemmer wrote to Otto Meyer, "The Bauhaus will reorient itself in the direction of architecture, industrial production, and the intellectual aspect of technology. The painters are merely tolerated as a necessary evil now."¹¹⁵ Perhaps in anticipation of being marginalized, or

¹¹⁵Oskar Schlemmer, "To Otto Meyer," in The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer, Tut Schlemmer, ed. (Wesleyan University Press 1972), 221

perhaps on principle, Marcel Breuer, Herbert Bayer, and Moholy-Nagy had already resigned before Gropius's decision to leave the school was announced. Moholy-Nagy made his intentions clear in a letter to the *Meisterrat* in January 1928.

As soon as creating an object becomes a speciality, and work becomes trade, the process of education loses all vitality. There must be room for teaching the basic ideas which keep human content alert and vital. For this we fought and for this we exhausted ourselves. I can no longer keep up with the stronger and stronger tendency toward trade specialization in the workshops.... The spirit of construction for which I and others gave all we had — and gave it gladly — has been replaced by a tendency towards application. My realm was the construction of school and man.¹¹⁶

The criticism of the tendency toward specialization and the emphasis on man are, no doubt, directed at Meyer's negation of the traditional artistic practice and the new subjectivities it engenders. One would think, at first gloss, that Meyer and Moholy would be close in their conceptualization of design. Both claimed to be more concerned with social issues of design than form alone; Meyer had published Moholy's essay "Ismus oder Kunst" along with a *Bildkonstruktion* and a *Metalonstruktion* in ABC 2; their positions would seem to be commensurable. But the terms of their disagreement is instructive for a fuller understanding of Meyer's thinking. Oskar Schlemmer, who shared his house with Meyer when Meyer first arrived at the Bauhaus, had already perceived a tension between Meyer and Moholy, as well as other main figures:

¹¹⁶Moholy-Nagy, 46, 47

[Meyer] was not interested in Klee; he says Klee must be in a perpetual trance; Feininger does not appeal to him, either. Kandinsky [does] because of his theoretical underpinnings. In terms of character he feels closest to Moholy, although he is very critical towards much about him — his manner (officious), his false teachings (which students also see as such and reject); he was not interested in Mucbe's steel-construction new building, since steel is the least important element in it. Gropius can count himself fortunate to have this honest fellow as the latest feather in his cap.¹¹⁷

Moholy's stress on man rather than the social-material product, his preoccupation with forms that bore no real relationship to either the actual techniques of production or the actual demands of mass consumption, and his pseudo-scientific teaching methods of a "master," all entailed an affirmation of a humanist conception of art that Meyer could not countenance. And Meyer's stress on the collectivity of the "design brigade," and his recasting of design practice within the categories of labor and material production implied an undermining of artistic institutions that Moholy could not tolerate.

Meyer's transformation of the Bauhaus *was* destructive; but it was not destructive only. Claude Schnaidt's account of Meyer's activity at the Bauhaus remains the most adequate, and it is enough only to recall a few positive achievements here. Within the new educational program, for the first time in the school's history, building

¹¹⁷Oskar Schlemmer, "To Otto Meyer," 202. Tensions between them notwithstanding, Klee would support Meyer when he was threatened with dismissal, and Meyer would write to him, "You must not think that I am in any way embittered. On the contrary the events have revived powers that I have had to stifle in Dessau. I feel younger and more ready for battle than ever.... You know that we will always reach out our hands to each other over the barriers that divide us. I will always remain grateful to you." Hannes Meyer, Letter to Paul Klee, Berlin 23.8.30, in Meyer, Bauen und Gesellschaft. Schriften, Briefe, Projekte (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1980), 74-75.

became a program on its own, with Ludwig Hilberseimer appointed its director. Other appointments made by Meyer included: Anton Brenner, who had studied with Peter Behrens and worked with Ernst May in Frankfurt; Edvard Heiberg, a Norwegian architect and theorist; Alcar Rudelk, a construction engineer; Walter Peterhans, whose conception of photography as a science Meyer had hoped would contribute to the "training [of] camera reporters and advertising photographers;"¹¹⁸ and Mart Stam, a Dutch architect and co-editor of ABC, and Hans Wittwer, who both contributed to the program as guest lecturers on mechanical engineering and town planning. Theoretical discussions were fueled by guests that included the Viennese logical positivists Rudolph Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Herbert Feigl, as well as Karel Teige, Hermann Finsterlin, Ernst Toller, Piet Zwart, and Dziga Vertov. "I never design alone," wrote Meyer. "That is why I consider the choosing of suitable associates to be the most important act in preparing for a creative work in architecture. The more contrasted the abilities of the designing brigade, the greater its capabilities and creative power."¹¹⁹

With new and previously appointed faculty, four departments were established within the school: building, headed by Hilberseimer; interior design, which incorporated the previous workshops in metal, wall-painting, and furniture, and was headed by Alfred Arndt, a former student; advertising, headed by Joost Schmidt, which incorporated the graphic and printing workshops as well as a new photography program under Peterhans; and textiles. Meyer had also intended to introduce courses on Gestalt psychology, sociology, and social economics. (See fig. 253.)

¹¹⁸Hannes Meyer, "Bauhaus Dessau. My experience of a polytechnical education" (1940), in Schnaidt

¹¹⁹Hannes Meyer, "Wie ich arbeite," Architektura CCCP 6 (Moskow, 1933); MS in German; partial translation in Schnaidt

The focal point of the school were three eight-hour workshops per week, now organized to work as collective, collaborative "vertical brigades." It was Meyer's intention to take the Bauhaus away from "a 'university of design' which made the shape of every tea-glass a problem in constructivist aesthetics,"¹²⁰ and to make the workshops self-supporting by marketing their designs through a commercial organization, the Bauhaus G.m.b.H. Wallpapers designed at the Bauhaus were made and marketed by Rasch and Co. and brought in significant royalties for the school. Meyer wrote,

In 1929 alone (the year they were introduced) more than 20,000 rooms in Germany and neighboring countries were papered with them. From the educational point of view, they provided an opportunity of dealing with the problem of 'color in the interior' as a general principle and also of making "hygiene in the worker's house" a reality, by producing cheap washable wallpapers.¹²¹

The advertising and textile departments were also commercially successful and each achieved its aim of a working liason with industry to mass produce goods at low cost. Meyer wrote,

The annual production, amounting to about RM 128 000 (1928) has been almost doubled..... In the last business year, RM 32 000 was paid out to students in the way of wages and this enabled those who were less well-off to study there. A Bauhaus travelling exhibition publicized our ideas in Basle, Breslau, Dessau, Essen, Mannheim and Zurich.... Industrial firms came along

¹²⁰Meyer, "My Dismissal from the Bauhaus," 101

¹²¹Meyer, "Bauhaus Dessau. My experience of a polytechnical education," 111

with urgent requests, engaged Bauhaus students on their staffs, and concluded licence agreements for Bauhaus fabrics, lamps, standard furniture and wallpapers. Thus there was every prospect of our finances being improved in future in the only really sound way, namely through self-help.¹²²

It is an ironic fact that the close cooperation with the workers' movement and the trade unions, and the involvement of Meyer and a few students in the miner's strike, would eventually result in his dismissal from the Bauhaus.

Between 1928 and 1930, Meyer continued the work already begun by Gropius on the Siedlung Törten at Dessau. The most important building project of Meyer and the Bauhaus brigades, however, was the Federal School of the General German Trade Unions Federation (ADGB) of 1928-30 at Bernau near Berlin (figs. 254-267). Meyer brought the commission with him to Dessau after winning in 1927 the limited competition with invited entries from Max Berg, Alois Klement, Willy Ludewig, Eric Mendelsohn, and Max Taut as well as Meyer, judged by Adolf Behne, Otto Hessler, Theoder Leipart, chairman of the executive council of the Federation, and Heinrich Tessenow. The school was to house Trades Union members and officials attending short courses and comprised residential blocks and teachers' dormitories as well as classrooms, a lecture theater, dining hall, and gymnasium. In his design, Meyer revised the basic proposition announced in the Petersschule of a simple volume of framed construction with fenestration determined by light and view, now treated as a sort of constructional integer repeated in a series across the site (figs. 256, 257). As in

¹²²Meyer, "My Dismissal from the Bauhaus," 103. Note that the self-help ideology can be traced back to Meyer's experience at Siedlung Freidorf.

the Petersschule, the circulation is contained and denoted by glazed passageways grafted to the series of volumes (figs. 261, 262); and the building components are disjunctively combined to stress the implicit reproducibility and rearrangeability of the execution.

If the plan form of the school belies Meyer's continued fascination with the dynamic graphic experiments of the elementarist and constructivist avant-gardes as the organizing matrix within which the aggressively tough, unsentimental building is executed (figs. 255, 259), and if such a synthesis would seem, on a purely formal gloss, to be continuous with the synthesizing, conciliatory ideology of Gropius, the changed historical and theoretical determinants of Meyer's building changes the meaning of the immanent formal structure accordingly. If we understand the work of both Meyer and Gropius to evidence the imprint of a particular historical mode of production, we must also recognize that the work registers that imprint in different ways. No single building — neither the most engaged nor the most autonomous, the most pedestrian nor the most distinguished — can reflect or duplicate or refuse cultural reality with perfect fidelity. To the extent that a work is *architecture* — that is, to the extent that it is inscribed in an already constituted field of cultural and disciplinary conventions that generate or enable the architect's intention to make architecture as opposed to making something else — it differs qualitatively from a simple mirror of an external reality; it *interprets* reality. But the difference, the interpretation, carries ideological motivation. It should be possible to recognize both the means by which architecture maintains a certain distance from all that is outside architecture — the specific use of the medium within an irreducible architectural modality — and the

conditions that permit the existence of that distance. It is the historical conditions and the theoretical transcriptions of those conditions that I have been attempting to chart here. And what I am now suggesting is that historical contingency and theoretical specificity, as well as the artifact's persisting material particularity, must all be considered as incorporated into the very fabric of the ADGB; they saturate the very essence of the work.

This understood, and having traced Meyer's interpretation of the conjunction of culture, politics, and form, a summary characterization of Meyer's early commenced but never completed collapse of architectural practice into social production can now be offered. At the Bauhaus, Meyer continued the process of shifting his activities from those of an avant-garde artist to an active *producer* in social development. Between 1928 and 1930, there emerged work of a more "utilitarian" kind, the attributes of which I have described. "Is our work to be determined from inside or outside?" Meyer's answer to his own question is clear, and it is a radical choice. What we witness here, it seems to me, is a fundamental revision of the terms of architectural practice which — rather than simply "applying" design to a given end, with all the inherited productive relations involved with "being an artist" left intact, as it was with Gropius — is made in an effort to anticipate the classic Marxist movement toward workers' control of production as part of the transition from the capitalist state to socialism. Rather than bending an already established practice to a given end, Meyer's shift at the Bauhaus amounts to the abandonment of the notion of the resistant avant-garde artist in favor of some other role, which we might call, following the Benjaminian model, "the artist as

producer."¹²³ And yet, Meyer's work by 1927 had already anticipated, as I have argued, *within the logic of formal investigation*, an ideological program which remained central to his utilitarian work at the Bauhaus. Thus, even though Meyer moves some distance from standard notions of the avant-garde artist, his position is never entirely severed from its avant-garde heritage. This is important because it demonstrates a double movement in the trajectory of his practice: a dialectic of internal formal and external socio-cultural determinations. Seen in this light, the significant factor for us is less Meyer's self-identification with a social revolution that could only remain in the distant future than his understanding of the preconditions for achieving it: namely, that a transformatory cultural practice must relate to an anticipated different mode of production by changing its formal means, audience relations, and the perceptual mechanisms for apprehending those forms accordingly.

The standard received interpretation of the successive historical shifts from traditional representational form, to abstract and autotelic "modern" form, and then to "utilitarian" or "functionalist" work —such as that of the Russian productivists, of the *neues bauen* of Martin Wagner or Ernst May, or of Marxists like Mart Stam, Hans Schmidt, and Meyer — is something like this: The ornamental, representational qualities of the traditional architecture of, say, neoclassicism or the Beaux Arts are historically contingent accretions on an idealized architecture which consists fundamentally of abstract tectonic and spatial organizations, of compositions of pure form and space. Renouncing traditional symbolic or representational form, as the

¹²³Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in Benjamin, *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978)

avant-garde artists and architects were supposed to have done, means that one is producing an altogether different kind of object — a nonrepresentational, nonutilitarian, purely self-referential object of autonomous value. A utilitarian turn, such as Meyer's in his work after 1926, for example, is then seen as substituting for that essentially self-referential, aesthetic purpose, a nonaesthetic, functional, and social one. All of which is to say that how we understand the theoretical validity of the utilitarian turn or of functionalism generally rests upon a very particular interpretation of the previous avant-garde formal strategies.

But the notion of avant-garde work as abstract, and nonrepresentational architecture has been based on a reading of its forms and its modes of reception that is too narrow; and the concomitant interpretation of Meyer's "functionalism" stands at the end of a chain of wrong inferences. If my attempt to remap the trajectory of Meyer's work according to a double movement of internal formal investigations derived from avant-garde research and a direct confrontation of those external determinations of psychic life under capitalism, which I have designated as reification and rationalization, is correct, then Meyer's work, any of it, cannot be said to be nonrepresentational in any but a reductive sense. The fact that Meyer's Co-op Vitrine or Co-op Zimmer, his Petersschule or his Trade Unions building do not look like classical sculptures, interiors, or buildings does not mean that nothing is represented. Architecture can construct a physical world, or present arguments about the nature of the architectural discipline, or narrate a vision about how we should live; in any case one is dealing with representation. Meyer's work seeks to fulfill the aesthetic, ideological, and protopolitical mission to recode the reified content of the objective, material world and

to make it available for simultaneous collective reception on a subjective, aesthetic level. The vestiges of the raw material of mechanical reproduction and reification remain visible in Meyer's projects, constituting the materials out of which the historical subtext of capitalist commodification could be constructed. At the same time, however, the transmutation of the world and its data, in terms of perception as a semiautonomous, performative activity, can be understood as an anticipatory representation of a future, nomadic society and a future or utopian mode of production and reception which seek to emerge from the hegemonic mode of production of the present. The possibility of the concrete aesthetic representation of social development is the precondition for Meyer's formal research having any moment at all.

This assertion can be verified in a kind of negative syllogism, borrowed from Paul Wood.¹²⁴ An important aspect in the transformation of the social relations of production concerns the division of labor, as we have seen, and in particular that between mental and manual labor. Workers' control of production functions as a sort of bridge in a transitional period, prior to the future realization of socialism. During such period of transition, when the workers' state has replaced the bourgeois state, the status of specialists like artists and architects undergoes a fundamental change. While such specialists are necessary to production both for capitalism and socialism, under the former system they are placed in the hierarchy of production *above* the worker, and under the workers' state the specialists are *subservient* to the collective will of the workers. According to the Marxist account, if such a situation should come about

¹²⁴Paul Wood, "Art and Politics in a Workers' State," a review of Christina Lodder's Russian Constructivism, in Art History 8, no. 1 (March 1985)

prematurely, the specialists could be expected to align themselves *against* the workers' state. Overwhelmingly, this turned out to be true in Russia after October 1917, with the exception of some of the constructivists and productivists, and it was also analogously the case within the Bauhaus after 1923. That it was not so for Meyer may indicate that his understanding of his own position was rather more astute than the commonly accepted image of a naive radical aligning himself, more or less prudently, with the bolsheviks, and emphasizing social concerns over "properly" architectural ones. Indeed, Meyer's vision of the changed role of the architect is central to socialist strategy, was held by him almost alone in the Bauhaus, and clearly stood counter to all the implications of Bauhaus policy before 1928, with its emphasis on the autonomous or managerial status of the designer.

Of course, the fulfillment of socialism is precisely what did not happen in Germany in the late 1920's, and the good intentions of a few cultural workers, however rigorously evolved in their own terms, could not make it so. And not by chance Meyer eludes himself that he will find in the Soviet Union, in the country of *realized* revolution, that which he had invoked in vain and showed to be impossible in the old and decrepit Germany by now heading toward Nazism. In what Meyer himself termed as a "flight into life,"¹²⁵ he wrote, "I am going to work in the Soviet Union, where a true proletarian culture is developing, where socialism was born, and where there exists a society for which we, here, in a capitalist regime, have fought."¹²⁶

¹²⁵Hannes Meyer, "Flucht ins Leben," in *Bauen und Gesellschaft*, 185

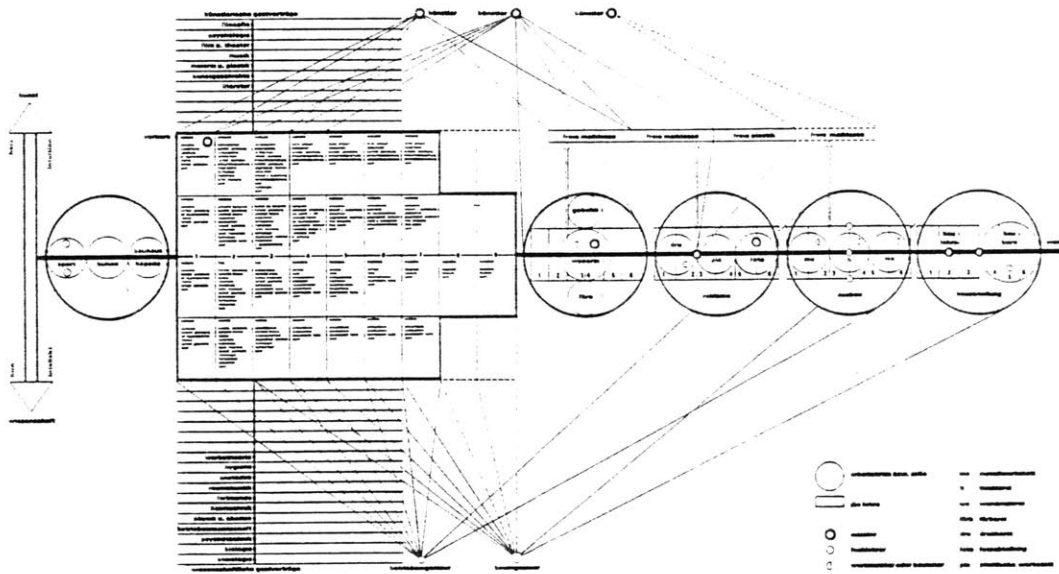
¹²⁶Hannes Meyer, interview in *Sovremennaya arkhitektura* 5 (Moscow, 1930); cited in Schnaidt, 27. Like many radical artists and architects, Meyer would remain optimistic about the possibilities for the Soviet Union long after it was warranted. See, especially, "Antworten auf Fragen der Prager Architektengruppe 'Leva Fronta'" (1933), in Meyer, *Bauen und Gesellschaft*, 121 ff. The problem of

Hannes Meyer and the Radicalization of Perception

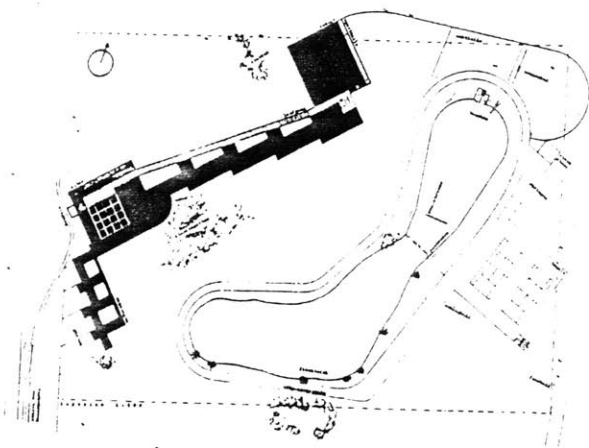
My attempt here has not been to assert a unitary causal factor for Meyer's production, certainly not an "ideological" or "political" one as against a "formal" one. The important issue is awareness of the prejudices and preoccupations of historiography: so that in the constellation of conditions surrounding any work, factors that have been marginalized without warrant may once more be considered along with those that have been foregrounded. In the case of Meyer's work, both the social *and* the formal preoccupations are central to the project. It is more difficult, and more important, to elucidate the relationship between these, now that in recent critical practice they are so often held separate.

Meyer's affiliation with Stalinism and those raised by his move to Mexico in 1939 cannot be dealt with in this dissertation. Yet the point of such an analysis would be the same: to interrogate the politics *of* form as well as politics *and* form.

The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building

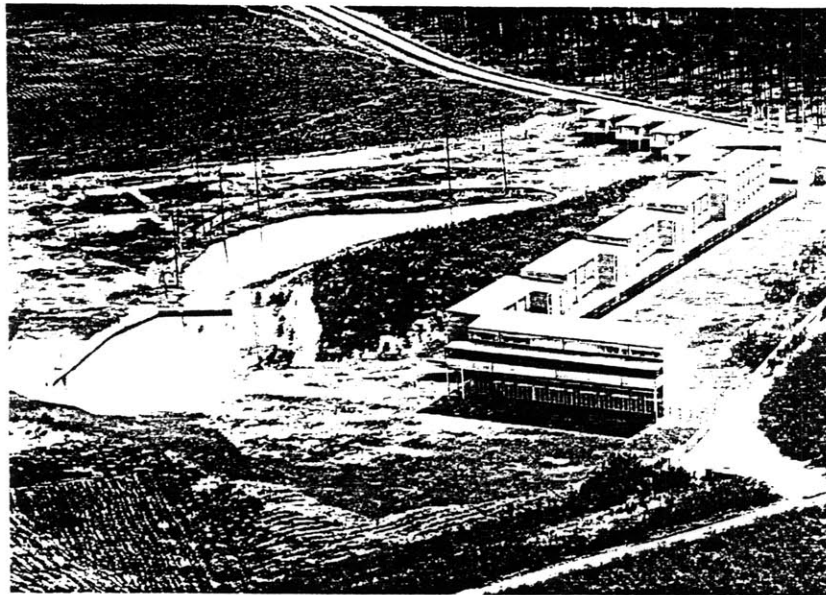
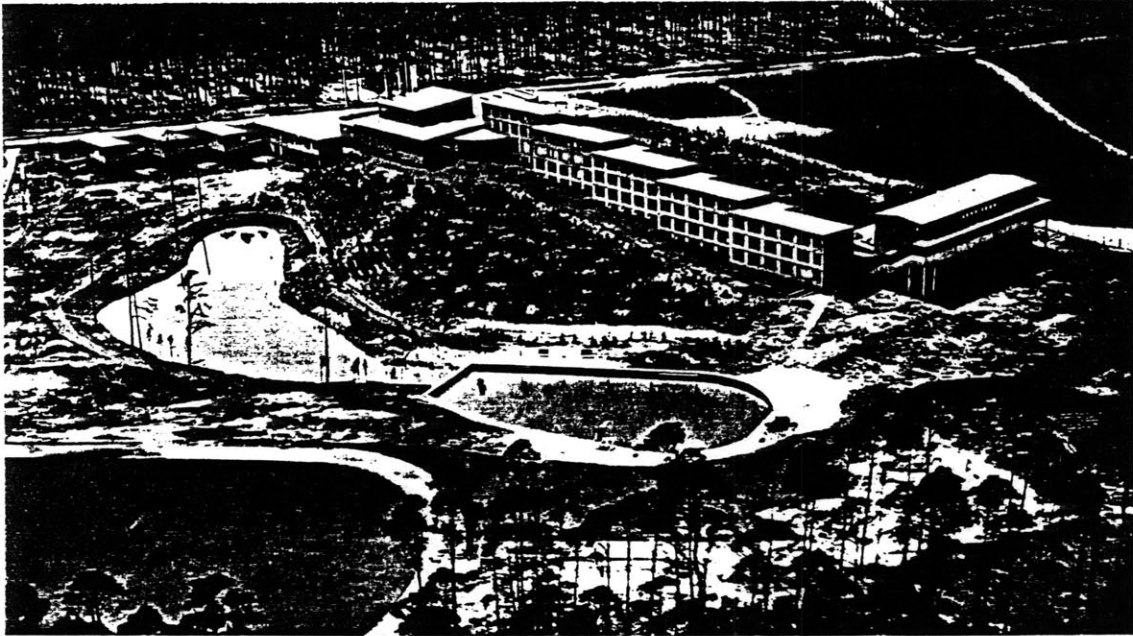


253. Semester plan of study at the Bauhaus under Hannes Meyer



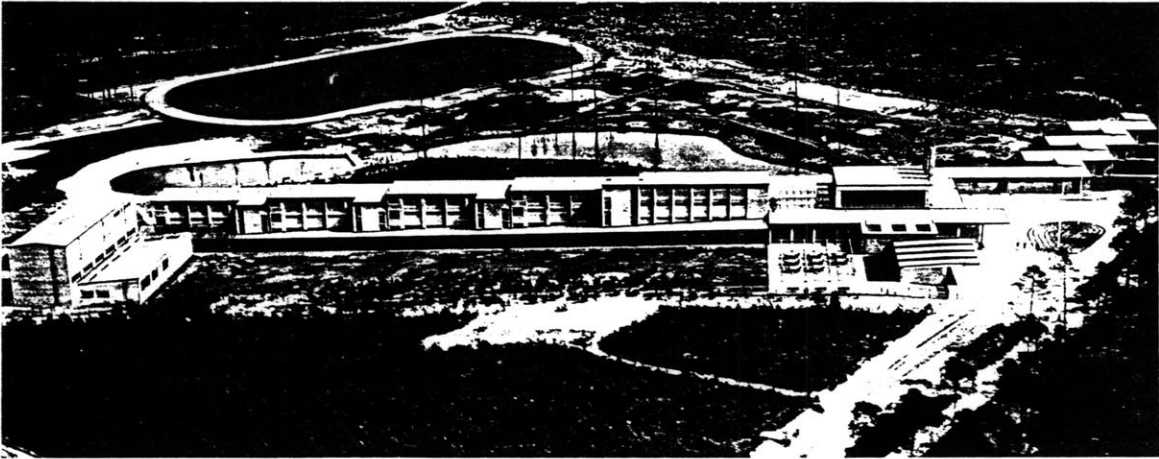
254. Walter Peterhans, "Hollow Concrete Blocks," 1929. The photograph was taken on the construction site of the ADGB school
255. Hannes Meyer, Federal School of the General German Trade Unions Federation (ADGB), Bernau, 1928-30, site plan

The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building

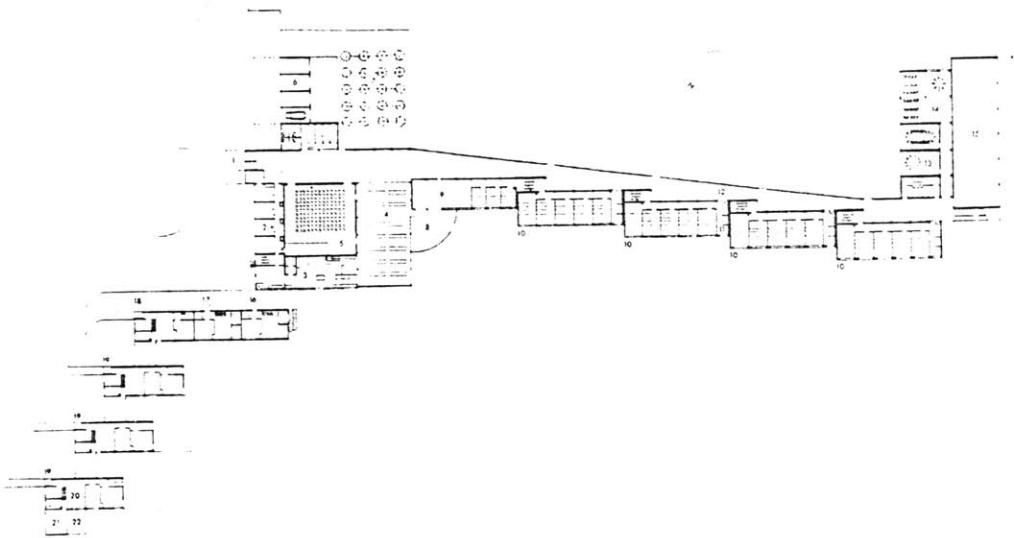
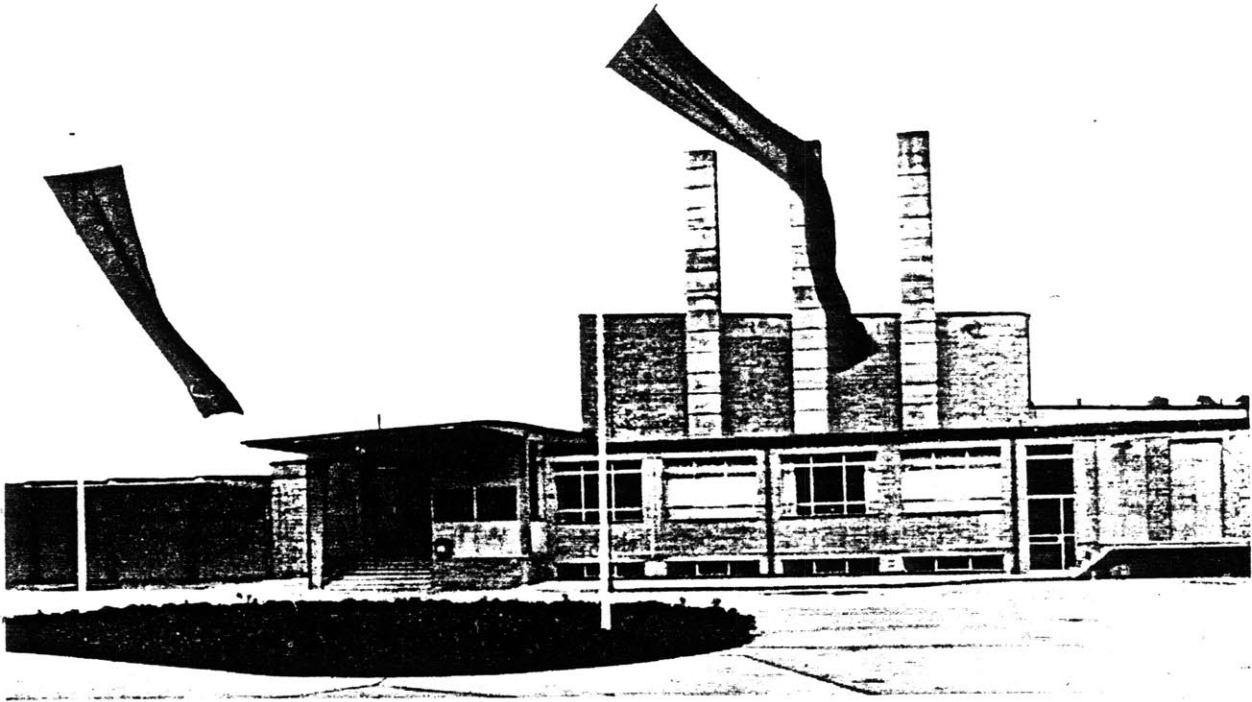


256. ADGB school, aerial views

The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building



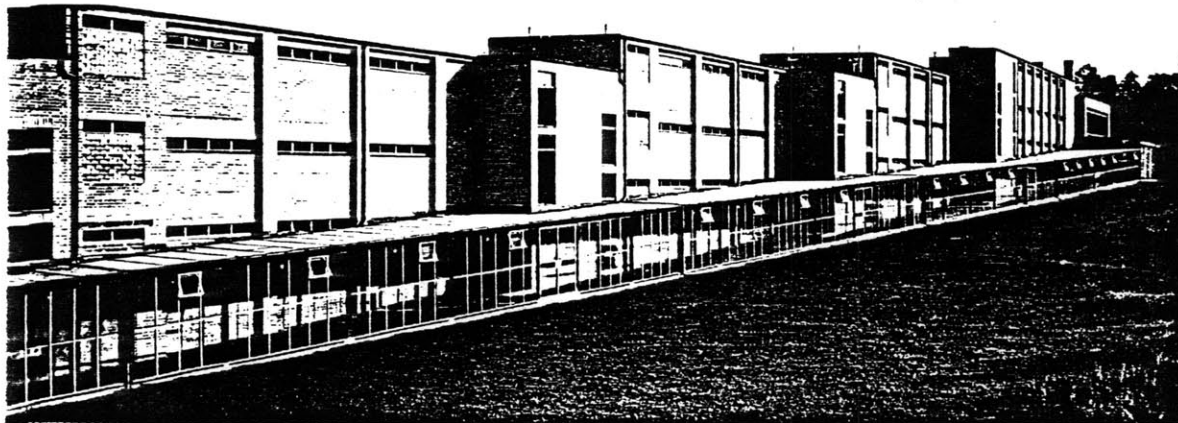
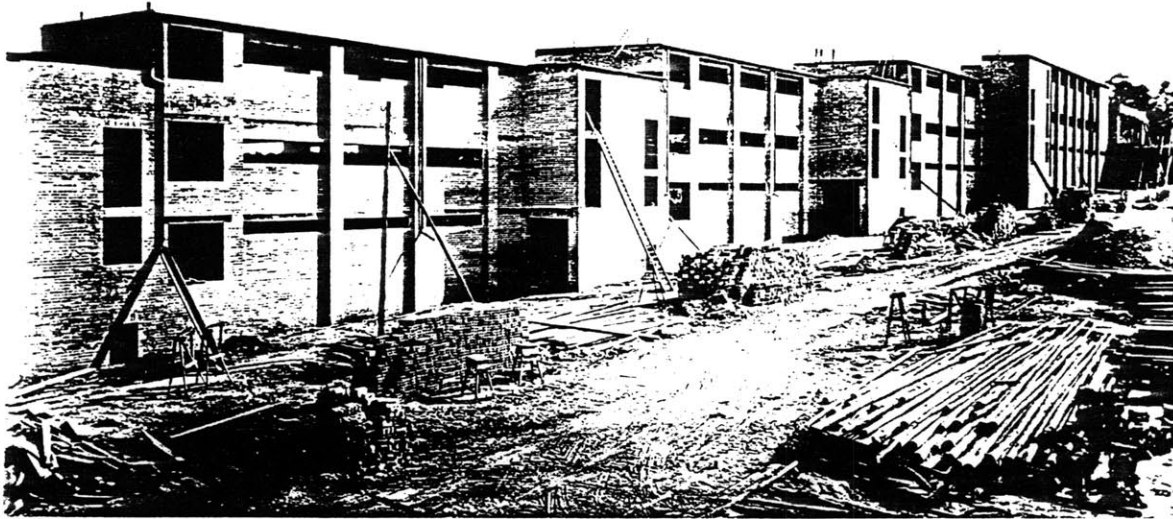
257. ADGB school, aerial view



258. ADGB school, main entrance

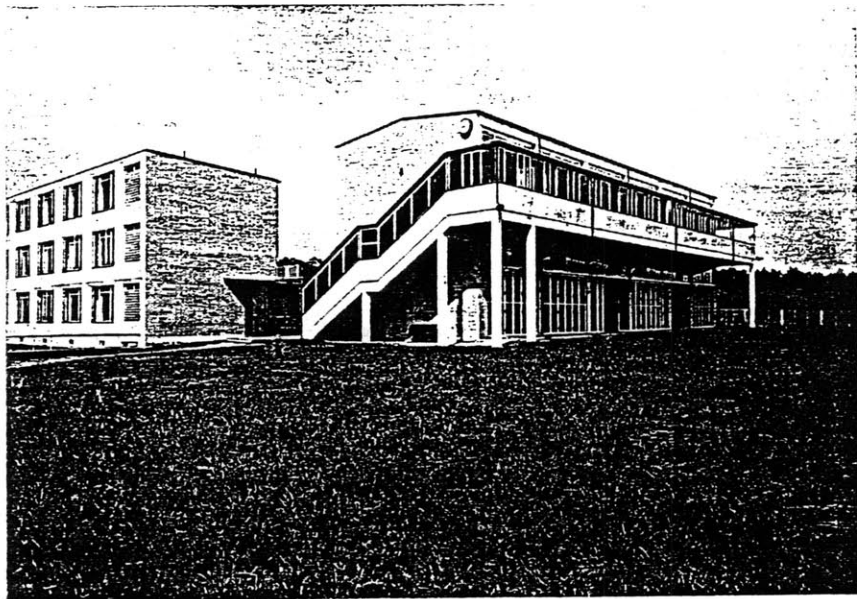
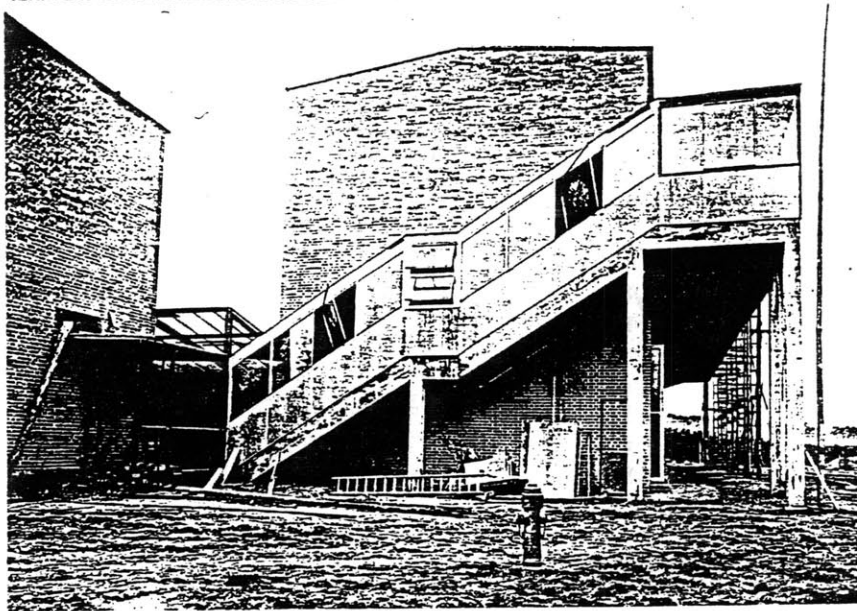
259. ADGB school, ground floor plan

The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building



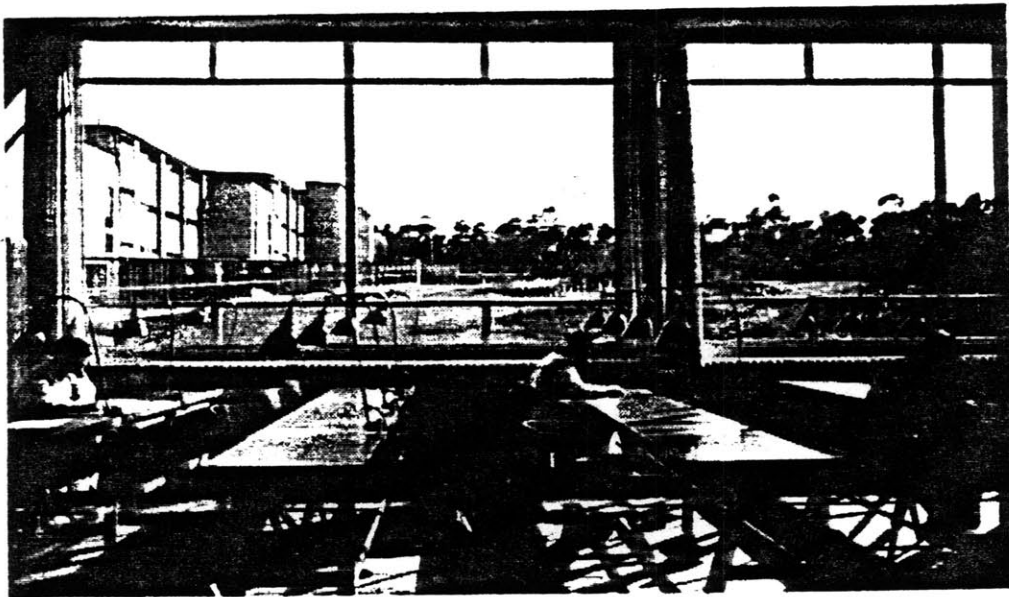
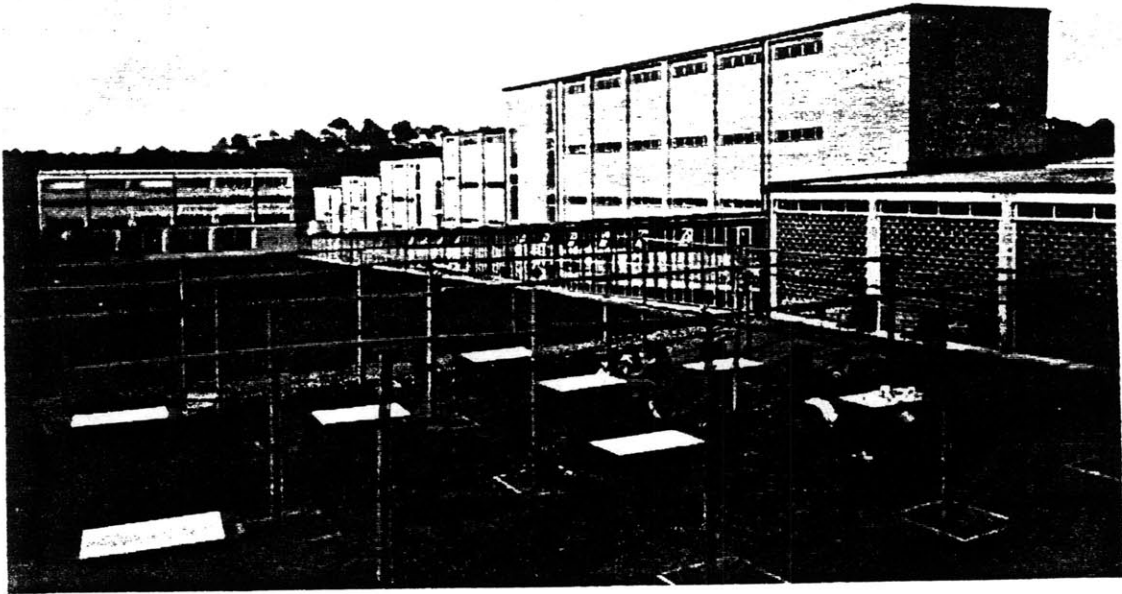
260. ADGB school, housing blocks during construction

261. Housing blocks after completion

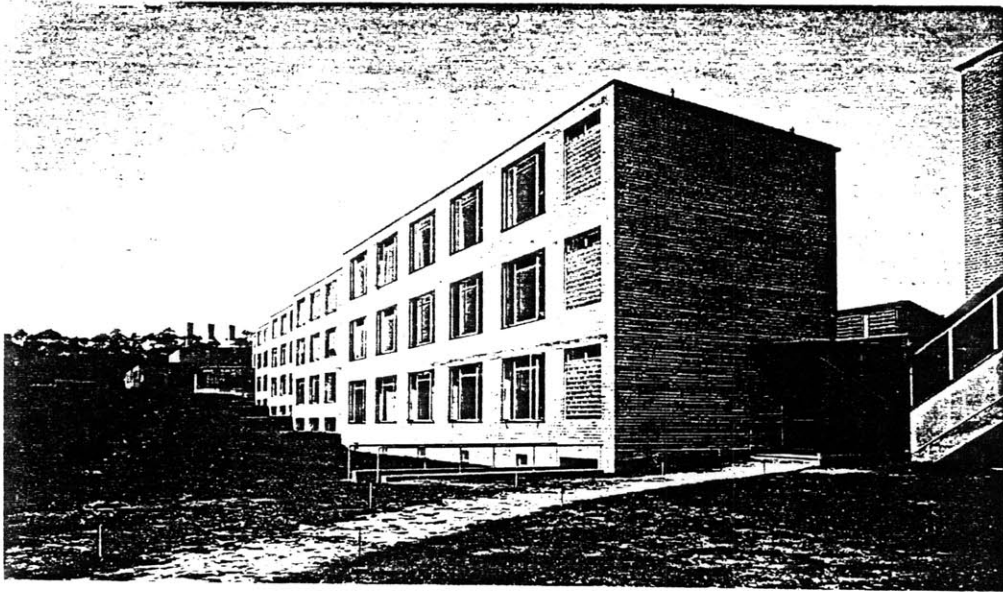


262. ADGB school, views of classroom/gymnasium building with corridor

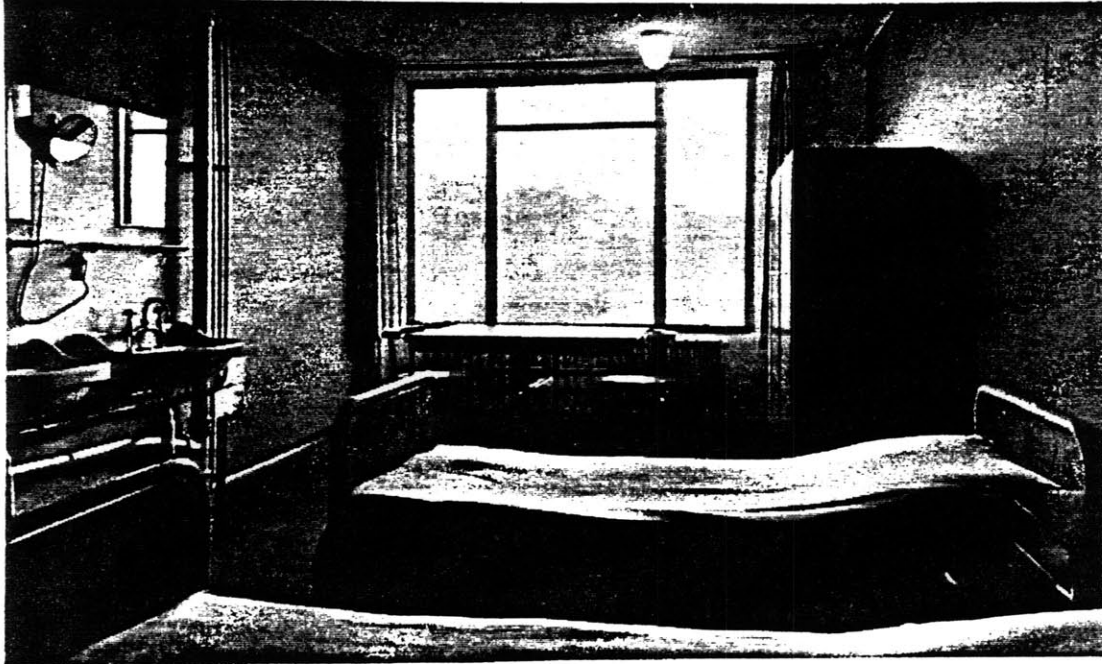
The Bauhaus and the Radicalization of Building



263. ADGB school, pergola, residential blocks, and school building
264. Reading room



265. ADGB school, residential blocks



266. ADGB school, students' room



267. ADGB school, corridor of residential block

III. **Reproduction and Negation: the Cognitive Project of Sachlichkeit**

No firm criterion can draw the line between a determinate negation of meaning and a bad positivism of meaninglessness, as an assiduous soldiering on just for the sake of it. Least of all can such a line be based on an appeal to human values, and a curse of mechanization. Works of art which by their existence take the side of the victims of a rationality that subjugates nature, are even in their protest constitutively implicated in the process of rationalization itself. Were they to try to disown it, they would become both aesthetically and socially powerless: mere clay. The organizing, unifying principle of each and every work of art is borrowed from that very rationality whose claim to totality it seeks to defy.

Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," in Aesthetics and Politics, Perry Anderson, et al., eds. (London: Verso, 1977), 191-92

Reproduction and Negation: the Cognitive Project of Sachlichkeit

The twentieth-century avant-garde's critique of traditional modes of artistic production and reception arises in a context of industrialized mass production. Mass production is predicated on reproducible operations and objects, which in turn necessitates a reconceptualization not only of the object (re)produced, but also of the relationships between the object and its maker, and between the object and its reception. The bourgeois humanist conception of the creating or viewing subject is one of a free, active, autonomous, and unified personality appropriate for the freedoms of an emergent capitalist society; and the formal ideologies of humanism reinforce this self-created signification. But industrial capitalism also engenders acute anxieties deriving from the chaotic metropolitan experience that challenge the viability of such a conception. In order to criticize and dismantle the humanist subject and its mode of artistic reception, the avant-garde draws upon certain negative aspects of the actual experience of such subjects in industrial society and injects into bourgeois humanist normality the alienating dissonances and contradictions that characterize rapid industrialization in tension with the persistent but now anachronistic ideals of unity and homology.¹ Industrial reproduction is in this sense constitutively involved in the avant-garde's practice of negation. To illustrate this postulate through a reading of Hannes Meyer's competition project of 1926-27 for the League of Nations and Ludwig Hilberseimer's *Vorschlag zur City-Bebauung* of 1930² is the intention of this section.

¹Hans Sedlmayer already lamented this "loss of center" in his *Verlust der Mitte* (Salzburg, 1948).

²Throughout this essay I will follow the convention of referring to the author of the League of Nations project as Hannes Meyer, even though Hans Wittwer surely played an important role in the design. Meyer and Wittwer received one of nine third prizes in the controversial competition. Hilberseimer's project was first prepared in 1928 and published in 1930 in *Die Form*.

As an initial characterization of both these projects, I shall adopt a distinction made by Peter Bürger in his Theory of the Avant-Garde.³ Bürger argues that, rather than merely to change received representational conventions, the major goal of the historical avant-garde was to undermine and transform the very institution of art and its ideology of autonomy. In Bürger's account the avant-garde was primarily an attack on the "highness" of high art and its separateness from everyday life as it had evolved under the precepts of nineteenth century aestheticism. Bürger suggests that the avant-garde attempted to reintegrate art with social practice as a whole, or to use his formulation, to *sublate* art into life.⁴

Such a distinction already permits a preliminary articulation of some of the different programs within modernist practice, and allows a reevaluation of the usual equation of modernism with the avant-garde. Various transformations of the presumed modernist paradigm have depended on the notion of a removed, inward, self-critical and self-referential architectural practice, one in which autonomy is taken as a sign of architecture's irreducible value as a high art. Moreover, the recurring idealist position in architectural historiography — the successful suppression of everything that is *hors architecture* in favor of strict formal analysis — stems from this same ideology of high art.⁵ For the avant-garde to militate against this ideology, indeed, presupposed a

³Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁴"Sublation," as we have been using the concept here, is the English approximation of Hegel's notoriously untranslatable term *Aufhebung* which means simultaneously "negation" and "preservation" in a different, usually "redeemed," form.

⁵I am adapting Edward Said's analysis of the literary establishment (see his The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983)) to architecture in suggesting that humanist ideology has produced a profession of specialists, usually called historians of architecture, who have claimed as their domain a limited field of affirmative formal connoisseurship. Operating entirely within this domain, their formal analyses validate the work of architecture, the work validates the

contemporaneous high art in commerce with a rather entrenched cultural establishment and its claims to authentic aesthetic knowledge. The avant-garde sought to destroy this myth of authenticity, to demystify and undermine the legitimizing discourse of the dominant culture, whose ambition it was to salvage the purity of art from the encroachments of technological modernization and mass industrialization.⁶

An effort to extend the explication of some of these delegitimizing procedures will involve us in a further discussion of the ways in which the avant-garde of the *neue Sachlichkeit* problematized the notion of autonomous architectural form and the concomitant centrality of the humanist subject. It will be helpful to begin the discussion with an example of an interpretive method in which form is still seen as autonomous and the subject remains at the center of meaning.

The cognitive project of humanist modernism

culture that produced it, and the culture validates the humanist historian. My point is that authority is maintained by such consensus as well as as by repression.

⁶I am to some extent eliding Bürger's analysis of the institution of art with that of architecture. Surely these two institutions are distinct, but they are also related. The valorization of aesthetic judgment dissociated from other realms of judgment and value is common to much of the historiography and criticism of both disciplines. Ludwig Hilberseimer indicates the contemporaneous perception of the close relationship between avant-garde artistic and architectural practices, and the commitment of both to the life world in his article "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst" (1923), cited by Manfredo Tafuri in "U.S.S.R. — Berlin, 1922: From Populism to 'Constructivist International,'" Joan Ockman et al., eds., *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (Princeton, 1985), 179-81, n. 89: "With great resolve, the constructivists have traveled a new path. That of reality. In their first constructions, which were not yet utilitarian, one can recognize a very clear will to take possession of the real. From construction in painting the constructivists have moved on to the construction of objects. To architecture in the broadest sense of the word. Constructivism is the logical consequence of methods of work that are based on the collectivity of our time. Thus it has a base that is of a general rather than a subjective nature. It perceives the subordination of art to society without reserve, as of all of life. It seeks its elements in the expressions of our mechanized and industrialized time.... The constructivist method brings any object into the ambit of formation. Not suppressing liveliness, but forming a reality."

That architecture is deeply and inescapably enmeshed in the material world may, on first reflection, hardly seem a contentious proposition. Yet a transcendent autonomy is exactly the objective of humanist readings of architecture, even in their more sophisticated and critical moments. For example, in their essay "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky concern themselves with architectural form as "a continuous dialectic between fact and implication."⁷ Rowe and Slutzky demonstrate that the brute facts of physical organization can be presented with a significant, inherent ambiguity such that those facts may be read in terms of competing mental constructs. As an example, Rowe and Slutzky analyze Le Corbusier's League of Nations project (figs. 301, 302) and the opposition it induces between the reality of deep space and the implication of shallow space, "so that finally, by a series of positive and negative implications, the whole area [of the project] becomes a monumental debate, an argument between a real and deep space and an ideal and shallow one."⁸ Through the "argument" — the continuous fluctuation between alternative interpretations — the building is experienced not as an inert, mute object, but as a topos of meanings constituted by a process of cognitive differentiation.⁹

The consequences of this kind of cognitive project are important. First there is a distinction between the real, unmediated object in time and space and the virtual object of the mind, a distinction dependent on the capacity of the viewer who encounters the

⁷Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 170; reprinted from *Perspecta* 8 (1963).

⁸*Ibid.*, 174.

⁹Rosalind Krauss discusses the at once liberating and tendentious imperatives of Rowe and Slutzky's formalism in "Death of a Hermeneutic Phantom: Materialization of the Sign in the Work of Peter Eisenman," *Architecture and Urbanism* (January 1980): 189-219. I am indebted to her reading of the Rowe and Slutzky text for my analysis here.

real object to organize, reflect, and interpret. Yet in order to make sense of the building, the viewer must have recourse to a set of ideal meanings of which he himself is the generator; each individual must create a transcendental object that stands in some kind of reciprocal relation to himself as a transcendental ego. The physical forms are thus subsumed by their own contemplation, and the goal of this contemplation is the constitution of an ideated, unified form. The intent is precisely to avoid any of the worldly, circumstantial, or socially "contaminated" content of history, for such material grounding would impinge upon the subject's interpretive freedom.

Rowe's and Slutzky's reading of Le Corbusier's League of Nations project is a particularly cogent example of what might be called the cognitive project of humanism. Without downgrading the technical brilliance and fruitfulness of this enterprise, I wish to insist on its inadequacy as an understanding of modernism. The hegemony of such a humanist ideology has created in the critical establishment a consensus based on a restricted kind of formal analysis of "disinfected" objects. This effectively reconfirms the culture enforcing these restrictions, blinding us to modernism's more anguished occasions, its active engagements in material and ideological struggle. It is an instructive coincidence that we can directly compare Hannes Meyer's most famous design, his League of Nations project, to Le Corbusier's. In what follows I shall argue that Hannes Meyer's League of Nations, as an engaged, avant-garde work, challenges the cognitive project of humanism by problematizing the cognitive status of autonomous form as well as the subject for which that form is a metaphor. I shall maintain an attention to architectural form, but shall try to recast the formal logic by which the avant-garde has conventionally been analyzed in order to include aspects of

modernist practice that have been neglected or denigrated. Meyer's project redirects our attention to those processes of modern life that lie beyond the individual subject, and we can detect this critical attitude within the forms themselves.

This attitude is not, of course, unproblematic. Later in this section, Ludwig Hilberseimer's *Vorschlag zur City-Bebauung* of 1930 will provide an illustration of the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in this posthumanist avant-garde, of the internal resistances to its self-declared forward movement, seeds of which are already present in Meyer's project.

The operative technique in the cognitive project of the avant-garde is the *practice of negation*¹⁰ — the dismantling of architecture's formal conventions, the production of ruptures and discontinuities, the repudiation of the individual author as the originator of meaning, and the denial of the viewing subject a space apart from life in which the mind is free to dream, to make its own connections, to escape. This practice of negation proceeds by a number of specific strategies.

Factural indexicality

Meyer's project comprises two related architectural propositions which follow some of the procedures already enunciated in the Petersschule. The first is a building system of reiterative spatial and constructional cells (figs. 306-318) — part of an open-

¹⁰The terminology "practice of negation" was suggested by T. J. Clark's "More on the Differences between Comrade Greenberg and Ourselves," in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin, eds., *Modernism and Modernity* (Halifax: University of Nova Scotia Press, 1983). I have modified Clark's concept according to the differences in the practices that he discusses and those of Meyer and Hilberseimer, but I wish to reconfirm his assertion that negation is a constitutive part of modernism.

ended, nonhierarchical field of spatial and structural coordinates — coupled with plain, tough, essentially modern building materials like "Eternit" (an asbestos cement cladding used in place of a more honorific material like stone), steel, concrete, and glass, with rubber flooring, cork-slab walls, and aluminum-sheet ceilings on the interior.¹¹ Such a building system resists the appearance of having been manipulated or mediated by a particular artistic personality or of having been fabricated for a particular (here monumental) purpose. The spatial and constructional elements convey instead their availability to society at large, and the fact that they are the result of certain modes of production, reproducible for a wide variety of uses. It is difficult, then, to read the building system as representational in any traditional, mimetic sense, or as having been deformed according to some autonomously conceived formal necessity. With its emphasis on the material congruence of the building system and the signification of the work, with its incorporation of the technical means of its facture into the form of the object itself, the work is, at least in part, a trace or direct registration of those materials and procedures of reproduction from which it is constructed. As such, it tends to resist assimilation in ideational terms, remaining obdurately external to subjective, aesthetic comprehension. The subject must rather think through the causal structures and processes operating behind the forms. I shall refer to this condition of the work of architecture as its *factural indexicality*, by which I understand that the work points to the (reproductive) processes of its making, seemingly generating its own representation without authorial mediation.

¹¹As Kenneth Frampton has pointed out, Meyer was careful to list the materials in his project statement and to insist on the status of the project as "building" rather than "palace."

The emphasis on the indexical status of the architectural object should be seen as part of an important step within the general transformation of the avant-garde in the 1920s. Though Meyer surely courts a kind of positivism here, I do not intend to construe his attitude as a deterministic understanding of architecture as index. What I wish to suggest instead is that his strategy effectively serves to block any aesthetic contemplation from a distance. At this point in the development of the avant-garde, factual indexicality means more than an emphasis on the formal self-referentiality of architecture, more than a coming to terms with its "medium" or its "constituent facts."¹² The indexical status of Meyer's project signifies nothing less than a rejection of any transcendental conception of the architectural object in favor of a conception of architectural practice as a worldly, engaged activity, a material intervention and organizing force; as an indication of the potential involvement of the architect with certain socially developed processes, materials, and standards of production that, in turn, are identified with social revolution; and as an expression of a wish to take part in the work of negation that is fundamental in other avant-garde practices, such as constructivism and dadaism.

Compare, for example, Alexander Rodchenko's Hanging Construction (fig. 320), part of a series subtitled Surfaces Reflecting Light of 1921. The engagement of the sculptural object with the viewer and the real world may be defined in terms of, first, the kinetic potential of the construction — the reflective surfaces register the changing movements of light, air, and touch — and second, the indexical status of the

¹²I am referring, of course, to Clement Greenberg's concept of medium and Sigfried Giedion's concept of constituent facts.

object — the serially organized form is a product of repetitive circular motions, a kind of simulated mass-production emphasizing the causal relationship between the sculptural sign and its referent of reproduction. What I am calling factual indexicality is, then, perhaps analogous to one interpretation of the Soviet avant-garde's concern for an indexical and textural *faktura*. As Benjamin Buchloh has written,

Quite unlike the traditional idea of *fattura* or *facture* in painting, where the masterful facture of a painter's hand spiritualizes the *mere* materiality of the pictorial production, and where the hand becomes at the same time the substitute or the totalization of the identifying signature (as the guarantee of authenticity, it justifies the painting's exchange value and maintains its commodity existence), the new concern for *faktura* in the Soviet avant-garde emphasizes precisely the mechanical quality, the materiality, and the anonymity of the painterly procedure from a perspective of empirico-critical positivism. It demystifies and devalidates not only the claims for the authenticity of the spiritual and the transcendental in the painterly execution but, as well, the authenticity of the exchange value of the work of art that is bestowed on it by the first.¹³

In his development of an architecture conceived according to a factual indexicality with its basis in reproduction, Meyer must have learned from Soviet experiments. Thus the rhetoric of his essay "Die neue Welt" of 1926 echoes Constructivist concerns:

Instead of easel-work, we have the drafting machine. Instead of the French horn, the saxophone. Instead of a copy of light reflections, we use light itself to create with.... Instead of the sculptural imitation of movement, we have

¹³Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (1984): 87, n. 6.

movement itself.... Instead of lyrics, we have the sound poem. Instead of the novel, the short story. Instead of color tone, we have value of the color in luxes. Instead of sculpture, we have construction. Instead of caricature, photosculpture. Instead of drama, the sketch. Instead of opera, the revue. Instead of frescos, the poster. Instead of painted material, the color of the material itself. ("Painting without a brush" in itself calls for picture construction for manual reasons)... The depreciation of all works of art is indisputable, and there can be no question that the continued utilization of new and exact knowledge in their place is merely a matter of time. The art of felt imitation is in the process of being dismantled. Art is becoming invention and controlled reality. And personality? The heart?? The soul??? Our plea is for absolute segregation.¹⁴

Meyer's effort to define what he considers to be an adequate artistic sensibility seems interminable; he pushes each signifying practice to its limits, where it turns back into unworked material — tough, emphatic, worldly. The radical quality of Meyer's approach, as of Rodchenko's, a quality continually perceived by audiences as an aggression toward the architectural object's status as high art and toward the individual or class for which that object is a metaphor, lies largely in factual indexicality as a negational operation.

Exteriority

Meyer's League of Nations project seems prompted by the acute awareness that neither the individual subject nor subjective attempts to recover the authenticity of the object any longer have a place in the mass-industrialized city, by the acknowledgment

¹⁴Hannes Meyer, "Die neue Welt" (1926) in Schnaidt, *Hannes Meyer*, 95.

of the absolute incompatibility between the realm of mass culture as a socioeconomic totality and the realm of contemplative inner experience. The second proposition of his project thus involves a search for sense within a larger conception of the reality of the metropolis, beyond interiority. Regarding this new frame of meaning, Meyer writes in his essay "bauen,"

all things in this world are a product of the formula: (function times economics).

so none of these things are works of art:

all art is composition and hence unsuited to a particular end.

all life is function and therefore not artistic.

the idea of the "composition of a dock" is enough to make a cat laugh!

but how is a town plan designed? or the plan of a dwelling? composition or function? art or life????? building is a biological process. building is not an aesthetic process....

architecture as an "embodiment of the artist's emotions" has no justification. architecture as "continuing the building tradition" means being carried on the tide of building history.¹⁵

The statement is first an aggressively rhetorical, materialist refusal of signification based on composition, a refusal of mimetic representation, of form itself. Second, it is an explicit desire to integrate art with life, or to eliminate the need for art from life, or, in either case, to deny a secondary level of aesthetic meaning beyond the physical traces of rationalized building technique. For to be "carried on the tide of

¹⁵Hannes Meyer, "bauen" (1928), trans. in Schnaidt, 95. Original is in lower case letters.

building history" is to conjoin building technique with emergent social needs. Meyer does not seek to propose a set of physical notations that can produce a transcendental object (the virtual object of a humanist reading) as their meaning; the architectural elements articulate an available reproductive system rather than a self-involved object. Moreover, history is posited as the driving force of this system. This disprivileging of a preordained, static, aesthetic ideal in favor of a nexus of relationships between modes of production and changing human needs means shifting architecture's meaning *to the outside*, so to speak, where structure is no longer predicated on private, psychological space but rather on public, conventional, cultural space.

We should recall here Walter Benjamin's insight that as one approaches those mediums that are inherently multiple and reproducible, not only does the authenticity of the object as a repository of meaning become reduced, but also the reproductive technique *as procedure* takes on the features of a system of signification. In refusing traditional representational forms, avant-garde architects reevaluated the logic of a particular source of meaning; they did not deny meaning altogether. They saw meaning as arising from the multiple forces of social practice rather than the formal qualities of the auratic art object.

There are representational and formal consequences to this relocation of meaning, nonetheless, and we are led now to consider them. As Meyer states about his project,

Our League of Nations building symbolizes nothing. Its size is automatically determined by the dimensions and conditions of the program. As an organic building it expresses unfeignedly that it is intended to be a building for work

and co-operation.... This building is neither beautiful nor ugly. It asks to be evaluated as a structural invention.¹⁶

The architect's polemical ambition is the automatic transcription of a socially determined, empirical program into built form. The architect himself is only a switching mechanism who sets in motion the processes of assembling an object made up of use values and visual codes already consolidated by society, thereby negating the controlling action of the artist as the determination of the architectural signification. To this end, Meyer deploys a number of strategies to redirect the cognitive project away from the production of ideated figures or formal unities.

First, the overall configuration is organized in relation to vehicular movement around and through the building (figs. 304, 305), with the pilotis of the assembly building (fig. 306) accommodating the access and storage of automobiles, 600 all together, six times the number required by the competition program. The vehicular provision also serves, along with the multiple elevator banks (figs. 306, 307), to categorize and distribute types of users of the building — personnel, journalists, delegates, and the general public. Furthermore, in spite of a competition program with an appendix of ten photographs showing the site's grandeur and pastoral qualities, Meyer's drawings, with their black shadows and depersonalized line work (figs. 303, 304), deliberately refuse the natural site conditions. Instead the project declares itself to be involved in the quotidian but dynamic, mechanized world of which the automobile is the primary agent. If in Le Corbusier's project one senses the attempt to isolate the

¹⁶Hannes Meyer, "Projekt für den Völkerbundpalast, Genf, 1928," in Schnaidt, 25.

architectural object in nature (fig. 301), its true ambience being somehow different from the randomly organized, gritty world of driving and parking, the consequence of Meyer's basic organization is to insist that the building is continuous with this space of the world and dependent on it for its existence.¹⁷

Moreover, unlike Le Corbusier's project with its central axis and stratification of spaces — "the essence of that phenomenal transparency" articulated by Rowe and Slutzky (fig. 302) — Meyer's project is egregiously decentered and dissymmetrical. Disparate architectures, abutting or nesting, articulate themselves from the same tectonic system (figs. 310, 316, 317). The discreteness of the two halves of the building, the secretariat tower and assembly hall (figs. 309, 311), declares the absence of any underlying formal armature that might in turn engender a series of spatial emanations. The cognitive map that a centralizing datum or ground would normally provide is thereby obstructed, and tension, contradiction, and difference define the relationships between elements.

Intensifying this perception within each of the two main halves of the building is the renunciation of a compositional device that would organize the diverse parts into a coherent unit, thus further exaggerating differences within the system. The general tendency in the fundamental building system toward an atomization of tectonic parts belonging to a larger but indeterminate whole is supported and developed by a secondary level of architectonic elements — agglomerations of skylighted commission rooms, lecture rooms, offices, a restaurant, and a library; movement systems like the

¹⁷Cf. Kenneth Frampton, "The Humanist versus the Utilitarian Ideal," *Architectural Design* 38 (1968): 134-36.

glazed stairways, elevators, and "toboggan" emergency ramps; and information-disseminating devices like radio antennae and illuminated sky signs (figs. 303, 316, 317). The unstable syntax of these elements is determined by their specific functional relations, "automatically" superimposed on the general system; their semantics arise from the mass-cultural, industrial city itself — plain, factorylike, porous, unyielding. "No pillared reception rooms for weary monarchs but hygienic workrooms for the busy representatives of their people. No back corridors for backstairs diplomacy but open glazed rooms for the public negotiations of honest men."¹⁸ Local symmetries and unities are deployed in elevation and plan but with disjunctive relationships to one another. Thus, articulations within the lattice of the elevations are made to seem randomly distributed over the surface, the stepped plan profile to seem aleatory and open-ended, and the architectural elements completely detachable and rearrangeable. To be sure, substantial formal decisions have been made by the architect, but with the effect that we conceive the building not as an integral formal organism but as an assemblage of architectural particularities, each clashing with the other, defined wholly in terms of their separate functional and material life. The body of the building thus contorts to assume the forms cast upon it by the forces of the city.

Finally, Meyer resists as far as possible the creation of any processional space that might result in a monumental unity. The classification of users by parking pattern at ground level allows him to rely on vertical modes of access to all floors above; the interjection of various banks of elevators at strategic points in the plan affords direct access to the vestibules located between the wings of the secretariat or around the

¹⁸Meyer, "Projekt für den Völkerbundpalast, Genf," 29.

periphery of the auditorium (fig. 307). Spaces of reception and passage are pushed to the perforated perimeter in a general avoidance of closure and containment. The viewer walking through the building finds himself always in residual spaces, in the gaps between the primary spatial units, compelled to move, constantly differentiating and recombining spatial experiences, but only in pieces, and only in time.

How can we characterize overall the strategies deployed by Meyer? In what is still the most convincing interpretation of Meyer's League of Nations project, Kenneth Frampton suggested,

Meyer sought to express his egalitarianism through the repetition of a standard structural module, part of an infinite field of coordinates. On this field his structural arrangement would arise in much the same manner as the 'image' came into being on a Mondrian canvas. The Platonic element for Meyer was the structural grid.¹⁹

Such an analogy means to claim for the League of Nations project a spatial order that arises from an a priori mental construct; it further implies an equivalence of signification between form and simple utility. While the analogy is helpful, I would like to offer an alternative one, which sees the reiterative building system and its relationship to the functional units as comparable to a dada photomontage,²⁰ with the bits and fragments of the real world registered on its blank page. The analogy derives

¹⁹Frampton, 135. This is an early formulation; Frampton revises it in his later publications.

²⁰For a more thorough explication of dada photomontage and the practice of negation, see my "Photomontage and Its Audiences, Berlin, circa 1922," *Harvard Architecture Review* 6 (1987).

from the fact that both Meyer's system and photomontage induce the perception of a condition of exteriority.²¹

Ordinarily we discover meaning in an architectural object or on a pictorial surface by claiming some sense from the outside world and constructing a unified, integral image of that world within the object or on the surface — a kind of surrogate for the perceiving subject, a metaphor for the integral self. But in dada photomontage what we experience more than a unified surface or pictorial whole are the fissures and gaps between disjunctive representations, and the interferences between signs from different systems (fig. 322). The dada surface does not allow us to impute to it any formal unity that we can press into service inward; rather it registers each of a series of intruder objects, securing them in isolation, holding each within a condition of separateness and difference. Such an atomization of material is governed by a system of meaning that is extra-objective. Thus, the dada photomontage, like Meyer's building, is less significant as an object than as a procedure. As Walter Benjamin has written, "What [the dadaists] achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production."²²

The medium of photomontage exactly suffices dada's destructive, negational task. It draws its material from those enunciative formations — such as advertising,

²¹The principle of exteriority is derived from Michel Foucault. "[This principle] holds that we are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of events and fixes its limits." From "The Discourse on Language," translation of *L'ordre du discours* (Paris, 1971) by Rupert Swyer, reprinted as an appendix to Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972), 229.

²²Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 238.

journalism, and mass production — that were already consolidated by society, just as Meyer uses mass-produced constructional ready-mades widely available for building. Dada photomontage exaggerates the chance accretion of fragments of manufactured experience, just as Meyer exaggerates the "automatic" accumulation of diverse functions. By showing reality sequentially and decomposed — one thing after another and one thing external to another — dada destroys the image of simultaneous presence that is a metaphor for the integral psyche. Dada montage exhausts, overwhelms the individual subject by constituting another place, another history, another way of thinking beyond the self, more powerful than the self. Exteriority, then, is this displacement of sense outward; and dada photomontage is precisely this exteriority given form, a topos of negation and estrangement.

Meyer's League of Nations project involves a more structured, perhaps more abstract version of the notion of exteriority. The architectural medium is understood as a construct encoding sociopolitical and economic processes and functions in the real world that are wholly in place before either the architect or the viewer encounters them, reproducing them for the benefit of the world and according to conditions set by and in the world. The analysis of Meyer's building, then, cannot proceed by means of a reduction of the complex form to a simple, unified diagram or *parti*. The building should rather be seen as a marking or trace of a larger, more complex totality — dense, quotidian, aleatory, exceeding individual, intuitive grasp. This is precisely the same exteriority that dada photomontage and Meyer's Co-op factography traces. Thus Meyer's functional markings come to us as a succession of units, as if from the unreeling of those larger cultural processes, a serial progression of separate integers

whose differences are not mediated by composition but rather revealed by an architecture conscious of the irreducibility of its disjunctions. Like the dada photomontage, Meyer's building presents itself less as an object than a multilayered field of convergence for the forces and signs of the mass-industrial city.

In pointing to certain attitudes common to Meyer and the dadaists, I do not intend to attribute to either an unself-consciousness with regard to form, but rather to query the grounds on which their formal manipulations are made. The works of Meyer and the dadaists reflect a wry, derisive awareness of the normative humanist subject they deface and of the humanist ideology of autonomy they renounce. Just as the dada photomontage adheres to the bourgeois artistic convention of presenting a unique, fabricated, rectangularly framed object even as it subversively injects into the singularity of that object the reproduced and dispersed images of bourgeois culture, so Meyer is driven toward conventional ways of architectural sense-making that are at once unacceptable to him but inescapable, vestiges of humanist perceptions that have become progressively empty but continue to exert their force. A whole tradition of representation is in crisis, but the search for meaning is not abandoned. That contradiction, that search, I believe, is what drove Meyer toward an insurrectionary participation in the discipline of architecture, toward architecture as social practice.

The radical quality of Meyer's modernism lies in the difficult truth that *things are just what they are*, utterly shorn of any metaphysical illusions of artistic authenticity, unity, or depth. Suspicious of subjectivity and the unified whole in which subjectivity affirms itself, the League of Nations project is a reaction against the very idea of an autonomous work of art, a refusal of the very possibility of the architectural

masterpiece existing in and for itself. With the renunciation of the organizational value of a purely internal formal necessity, the concept of the work as a self-involved object is shattered. The work no longer presents an unbroken and homogeneous appearance, no longer stands complete and suspended, as it were, against the world, but rather falls into the world, becoming one worldly thing (*Sache*) among others. The boundaries between the facts of modern society and aesthetic production are thereby dismantled, and that production returned to its unprivileged place within the totality of social practices.

The deconstruction of functionalism

Within the discourse of *Sachlichkeit*, the architectural avant-garde in the late 1920s was to rationalize its program in terms of overcoming the dialectic between whole and part already formulated by Meyer, between the totality of the city and the elementary cell. In his Groszstadtarchitektur of 1927, Ludwig Hilberseimer writes,

The architecture of the metropolis depends essentially on the solution given to two factors: the elementary cell and the urban organism as a whole. The single room as the constituent element of the habitation will determine the aspect of the habitation, and since the habitations in turn form blocks, the room will become a factor of urban configuration, which is architecture's true goal. Reciprocally, the planimetric structure of the city will have a substantial influence on the design of the habitation and the room.²³

²³Ludwig Hilberseimer, Groszstadtarchitektur (Stuttgart: Verlag Julius Hoffmann, 1927).

The metropolis for Hilberseimer is a complex homeostatic machine. The reproducible elements at the molecular level — each identical in size and shape, without a priori determined points of focus or termination — translate and relay information received from the global structure of the city, even as these same elements are, in turn, the prime constitutive units of that structure. The abolition of the gap between the urban order and the individual cell eliminates the possibility of attributing significance to the act of selecting or arranging forms. The auratic architectural object is systematically and utterly defeated by techniques of reproduction now radically rationalized and expanded.

From this analysis comes Hilberseimer's Hochhausstadt project of 1924 (fig. 323),²⁴ which he reproduces in his Groszstadtarchitektur. It is a project menaced with ambiguity. As a first characterization, it may be construed as an attempt at a complete encoding, within the conventions of architectural representation, of the condition of exteriority. The most striking aspect of Hilberseimer's perspective drawings is their quality of persistence — the relentless repetition of the same cellular blocks without any climax, seemingly without any personality having given them form or direction, without subjectivity (excepting, perhaps, some vestigial anguish for the suppressed subject in the drawing's texture, size, and above-eye-level vanishing point). The formerly self-constituting subject, now disencumbered of all remnants of independent personality, no longer attends, reflects, or organizes; Hilberseimer's perspective is not the same "view" one has in a humanist perspective where the form of representation functions as a system of knowledge organized around and for the viewer's own

²⁴The project was first published in Die Form, 1926.

centrality. The subject — still a concrete individual, but at the same time part of a more general, collective human substance, a component in a larger totality of interlocking mechanical processes and social institutions — is now constituted by the system. And the subject's conscious experience of interpretation (which used to correspond to its ability to reason and reflect) becomes little more than a process of acknowledging the extension of a code, tracing the external network of socioeconomic and historical circumstances that determine and manipulate the subject, recognizing that the network exists beyond the present moment and that one will, in the course of one's movement through the world, come into contact with further aspects of it.

On this view, Hilberseimer's project carries to completion a latent tendency in Meyer's work toward an overdetermination of all elements, but, in contrast to Meyer, results in an abolition of contingencies, an assimilation or absorption of all particularity in the raw material into the totalizing structure of the work itself. In Hilberseimer's own words, "the general case and the law are emphasized and made evident, while the exception is put aside, the nuance canceled."²⁵

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that while Hilberseimer's total unification of repetitive cells and the global structure of the city may have been effective in shifting architectural meaning from the aesthetic realm to a deeper logic of the socioeconomic metropolis itself, the architect as hard put to find in this logic a source for invention. It risks little to assert that from the time Hilberseimer committed himself to the totalization announced in the Hochhausstadt, his work virtually ceased to develop and instead became involved with radical repetition. Thus he could propose only the same

²⁵Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*

organization for his *Vorschlag zur City-Bebauung* of 1930 (fig. 325) as he had for his *Hochhausstadt* of 1924, and for Chicago as he had for Berlin (fig. 326).²⁶ In 1926 and '27, Hilberseimer exhibited a project for a tower made of six of his fifteen-story buildings, now stacked (fig.327).²⁷ That Hilberseimer should have maneuvered himself into this particular position is quite interesting. For we are led to focus on the apparent fact that logically, axiomatically, such a totalizing organization — one in which the productive, causal source of signification is based on reproduction — *can only be repeated*.²⁸

The case is made dramatically in Hilberseimer's *Vorschlag zur City-Bebauung* of 1930 (fig.325). To begin with there are the anti-illusionistic strategies of the axonometric drawing; the margin of the drawing cuts the outer blocks, and the letters of the title are placed within the margins of the image in such a way as to suppress all effect of depth. But what I wish to concentrate on is the insertion in the drawing of what is apparently a variant scheme. The drawing with its insertion becomes a kind of *mise-en-abîme*, for the variant is simply an axonometric reproduction of the *Hochhausstadt* of 1924 (!), and its insertion places within the field of the representation another representation reduplicated by the first. The insertion serves to focus our attention precisely on the absence of origins.

²⁶The Berlin application was published in *Die Form*, 1930.

²⁷The model was exhibited at the *Ausstellung der freien Wohlfahrtspflege* in Düsseldorf in May-October 1926, and in Stuttgart in May-June 1927.

²⁸For this analysis of the nonoriginality of origins, I am indebted to Rosalind Krauss's discussion of the pictorial grid in "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," *October* 18 (1981): 47-66.

What we witness in this *mise-en-abîme* is nothing less than a subtle deconstruction of the notion of function as the origin of architectural form. The notion of functionalism — the originary status of the brute, objective facts of utility intersecting with measured, standardized means of production — has been supposed to provide a fundamental demarcation within modern architecture, one made manifest by *Sachlichkeit*. Yet Hilberseimer's drawing makes it clear that the originary status of function is a fiction.

Between the multilayered functions within the city, the means of production, and the architectural form that is supposed to be their product, there does not obtain the determined correspondence necessary for a notion of origin. On the one hand, the serial cellular organism that constitutes Hilberseimer's city follows the implacable logic of the city's production cycles. But it is not transparent to those cycles. It is rather a tissue of representation that reveals only their most salient contours. Hilberseimer's project organizes a metaphor for the city's own productive and functional procedures, mediating those procedures through the conventions of architectural form, and thus effectively truncating the complex technical, social, and economic conditions that produced it, concealing the "real" origins of its formation by displacing them with a substitute — an irreducibly architectural form.

Therefore, on the other hand, the form also precedes the functional and productive factors. Behind Hilberseimer's representation, his system of signs, are all those other representations through which the city's activities and production — its material life — are necessarily described. To the extent that it is architecture, Hilberseimer's project is inscribed in a particular field of representations that is already

constituted as architectural; his project summarizes other projects, only the most obvious of which is his own. Whatever sense we make of the project has to do with our use of conventions of meaning that allow us to sort the architectural elements into significance. Hilberseimer's architecture thus does not (cannot) absolutely correspond to material life, but rather translates it from one sign system (socioeconomic) into another (architectural). *Sachlichkeit*, however much it resisted a basis in form, was brought into play with formal metaphors, with the architectural medium in all its quiddity as a vehicle for certain senses, qualities, and values: architecture seen as the production of material life, as function. Hilberseimer's drawing demonstrates peremptorily that form can only follow function when function has first been interpreted as a possibility of form.

Within the discourse of modern architecture the originary status of function as a generator of form and of the active human subject as a generator of meaning have been presumptions upon which corollaries of authenticity, affirmation, and fullness and communicability of meaning are based. The analysis here leads us to suggest that it is within an altogether different realm that a definition of the historical avant-garde might be found — in the realm where naive functionalism and the self-constituted subject are both defeated by the coupling of reproduction and negation.

The negation of negation

Hilberseimer's ultimate solution is not, however, without further inherent contradictions. The characterization of Hilberseimer's system as "total" deliberately emphasizes the term of affiliation of his project with an emerging tendency in the

socioeconomic structure of the modern world toward radical systematization, a tendency of which fascist political regimes have been only the most malevolent manifestation.²⁹ If Hilberseimer's drawing comprises a sign system for an external network of socioeconomic and historical circumstances, it does so at a particular moment in the historical development of these circumstances. For in the later stages of monopoly capitalism all the multiplicity and particularity of activities — of production, distribution, and reception — are rationalized into a single all-absorbing mechanism. And with Hilberseimer's project, so radically linked to the mindset of modernization, this new totalitarian planification of the public realm is operative in the structure of the work of architecture itself. In his drawing all dissonances and disjunctions are absorbed, all differences canceled; the metropolis described here does not permit alternatives. The project is not simply an available, neutral matrix in which monopoly capitalism might incidentally play itself out, absorbing all things, people, and thought into a single-market system; it is itself a form of that system. Now a constraint more than a liberating convention, *Sachlichkeit's* ambition of negation turns back on itself, reentering the work as its opposite — as ideology, as fixed patterns of form, action, and thought, as hypostatized rationalism.

The disintegrating ambiguity of Hilberseimer's work stands in poignant parallel to the disintegration of Weimar Germany and its passage into fascism. This is the crisis of modernist culture itself: adversarial, as we saw with Meyer, but in its drive toward a

²⁹I was led to this understanding of Hilberseimer through a reading of Theodor Adorno's analysis of Schoenberg in *The Philosophy of New Music*.

total organization of the city, conceptually and practically bound up with capitalist modernization and its consequences.

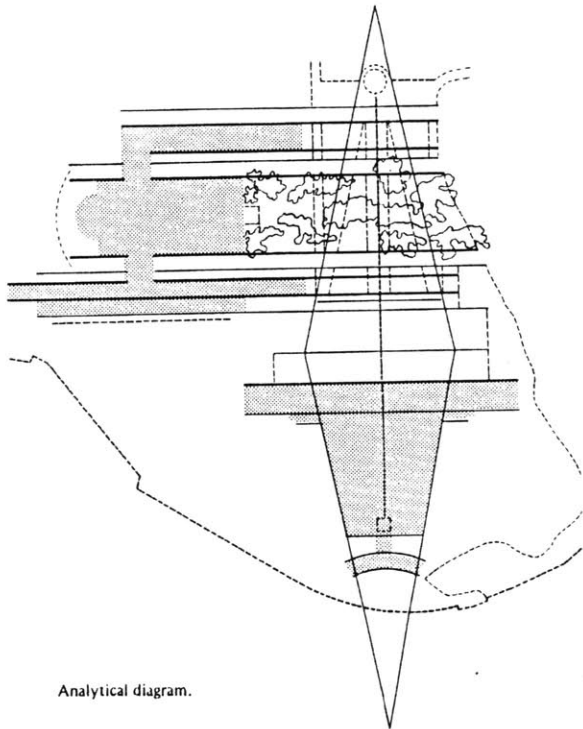
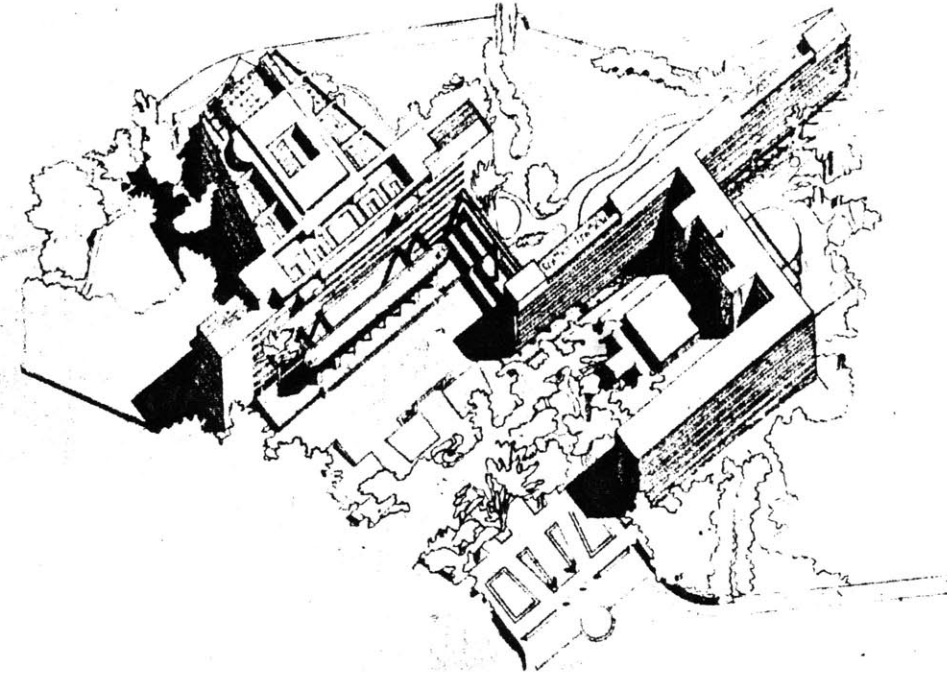
Perhaps I can make my the foregoing points clearer by making my judgment more explicit. It is the relentlessness of Meyer's practice of negation that is admirable and, I believe, still a viable project for architectural practice — his annihilation of the traditional, hegemonic repertoire of traditional representational form, his fragmentation of form and registration of dissonances, and his shattering of the basis of traditional artistic totalization, the contemplative subject. The problem remains, however, that the process of negation tends in the long run to overwhelm avant-garde practice; it quickly becomes cumulative and uncontrollable.³⁰ Thus, Hilberseimer's work, identifying too completely with the processes and structures of modernization and its promise of progress, is absorbed in the totalization of monopoly capital, ironically becoming the very form of totalization that Meyer sought to avoid through his critical assertion of radical fragmentation. Without straying from the terrain of architecture, the avant-garde finds itself deeply implicated in a struggle between adversarial negation and affirmation of the structure of totalitarian society.

Avant-garde practice is predicated on reproduction as negation, a strategy that is inscribed in the very forms in which others would find synthesis and reintegration or self-delighting formal play. In avant-garde practice negation appears not as a redemptive effort that blazes the way for a new fullness of meaning, but rather as an all-encompassing fact, pulling like an undertow, ultimately swallowing meaning altogether. To pierce through negation is to find, on one side, emptiness, and, on the

³⁰Cf. Clark, "More on the Differences," 185.

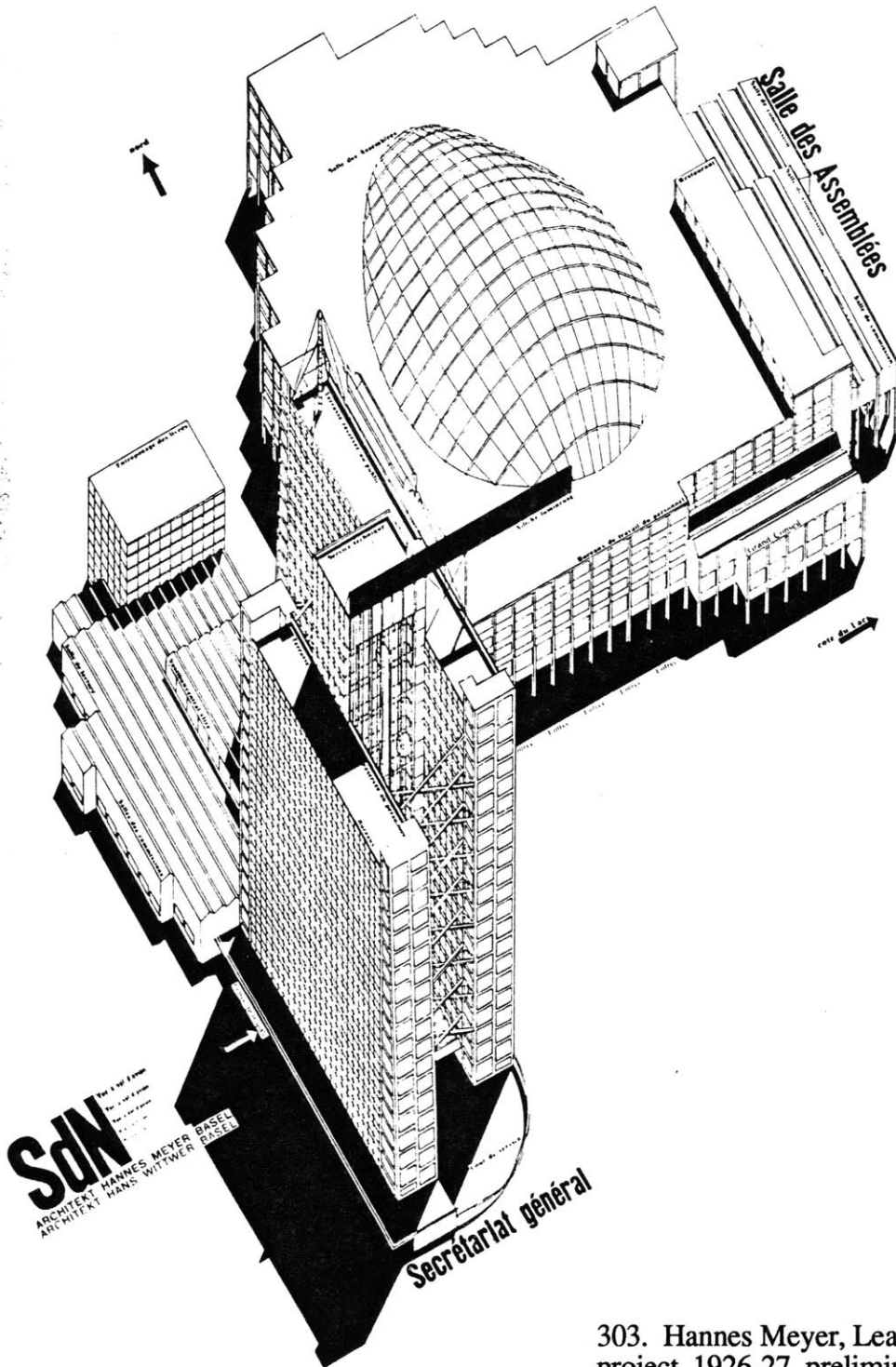
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other, totalization: this is the dilemma the avant-garde confronted constantly, the terms of which it tried constantly to refuse.

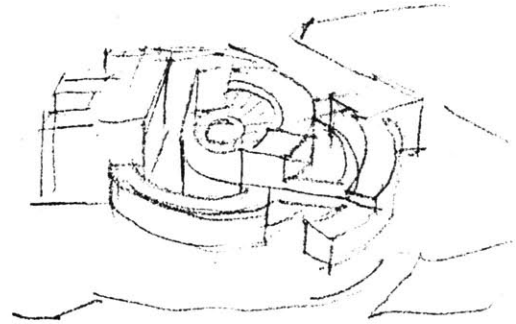
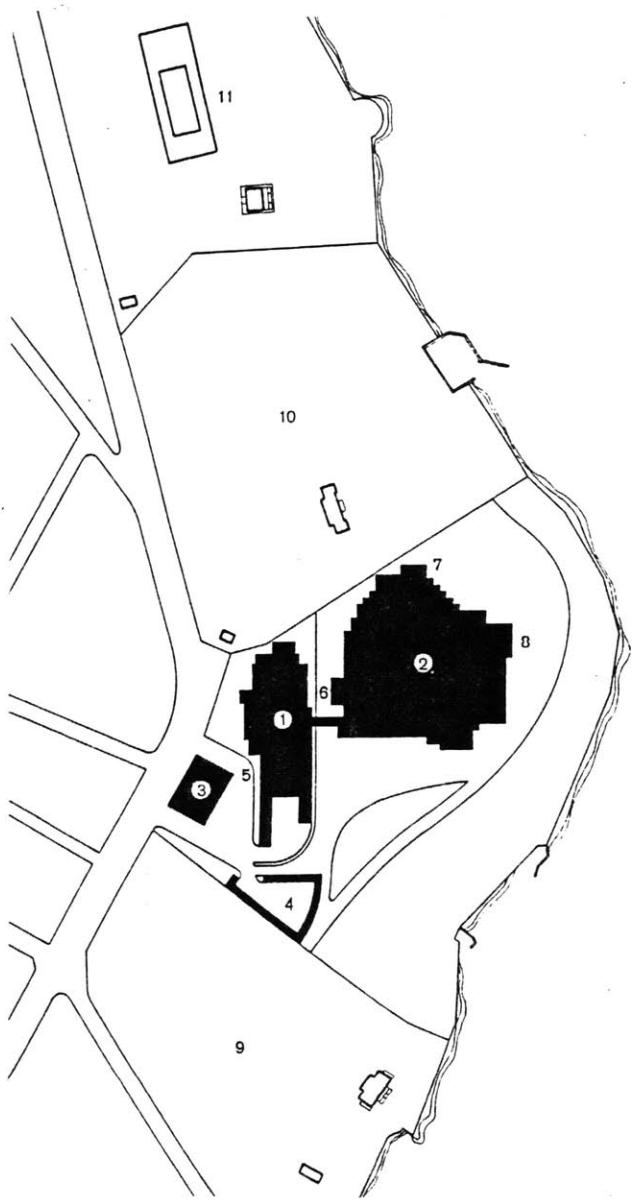


Analytical diagram.

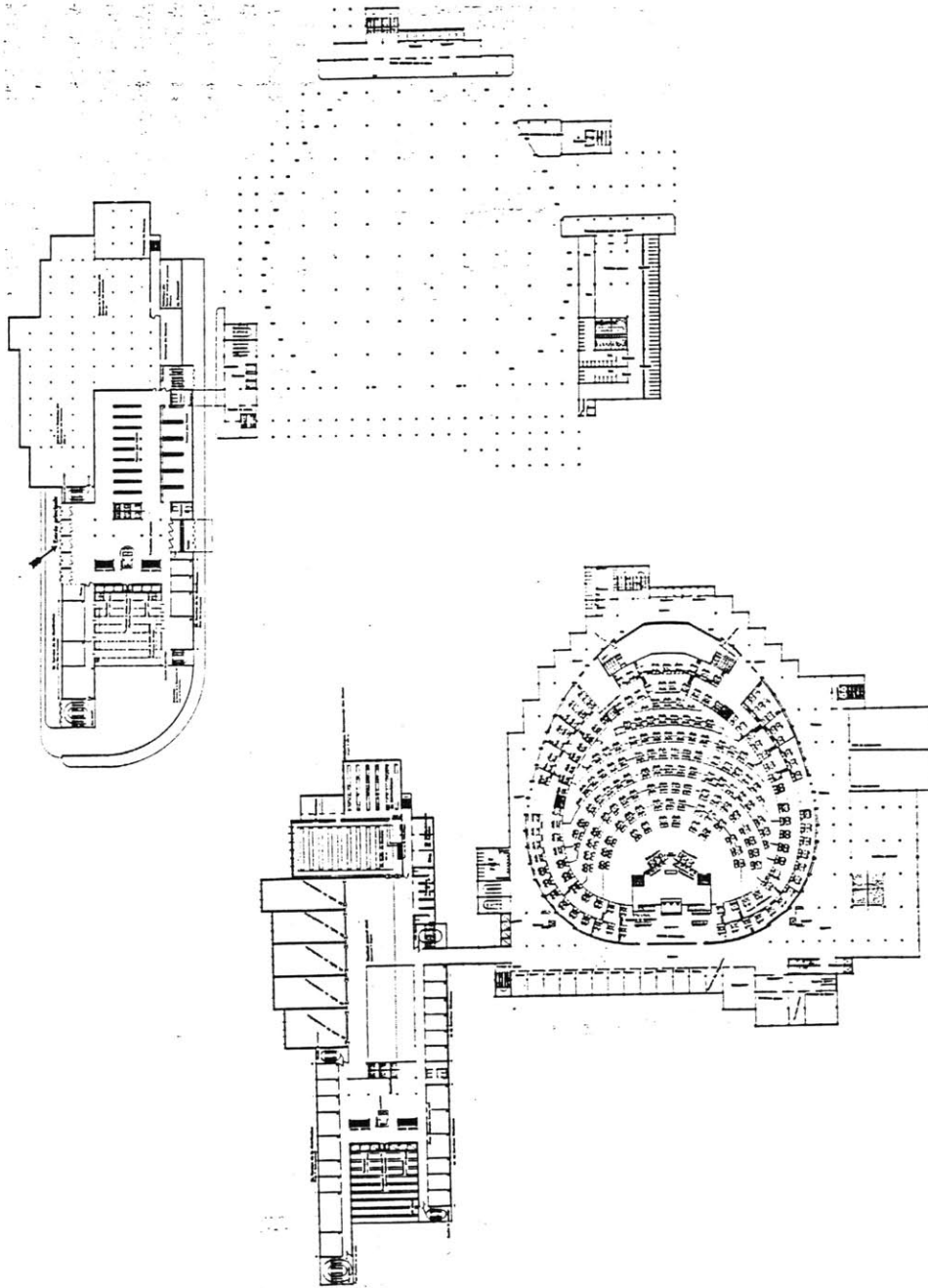
- 301. Le Corbusier, League of Nations project, 1926-27,
- 302. Rowe-Slutzky diagram of Le Corbusier's League of Nations project



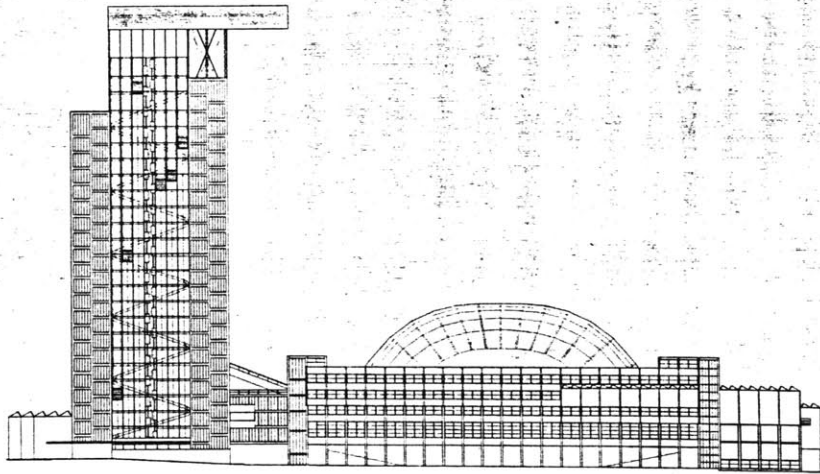
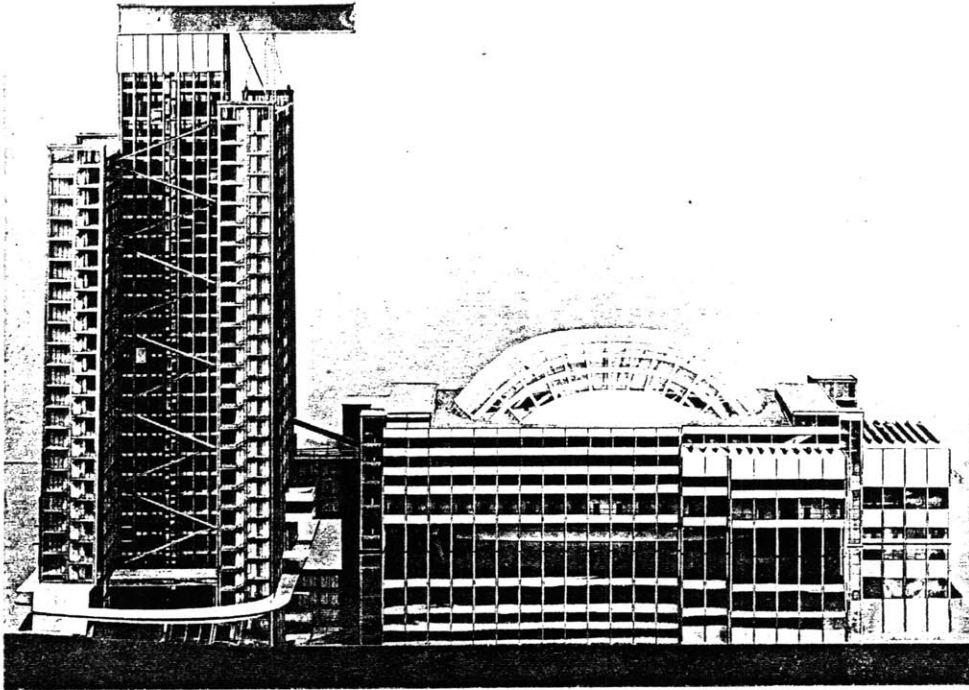
303. Hannes Meyer, League of Nations project, 1926-27, preliminary axonometric



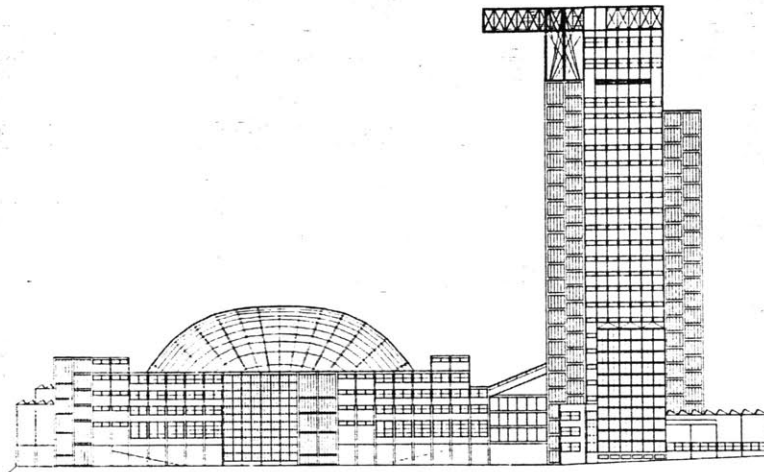
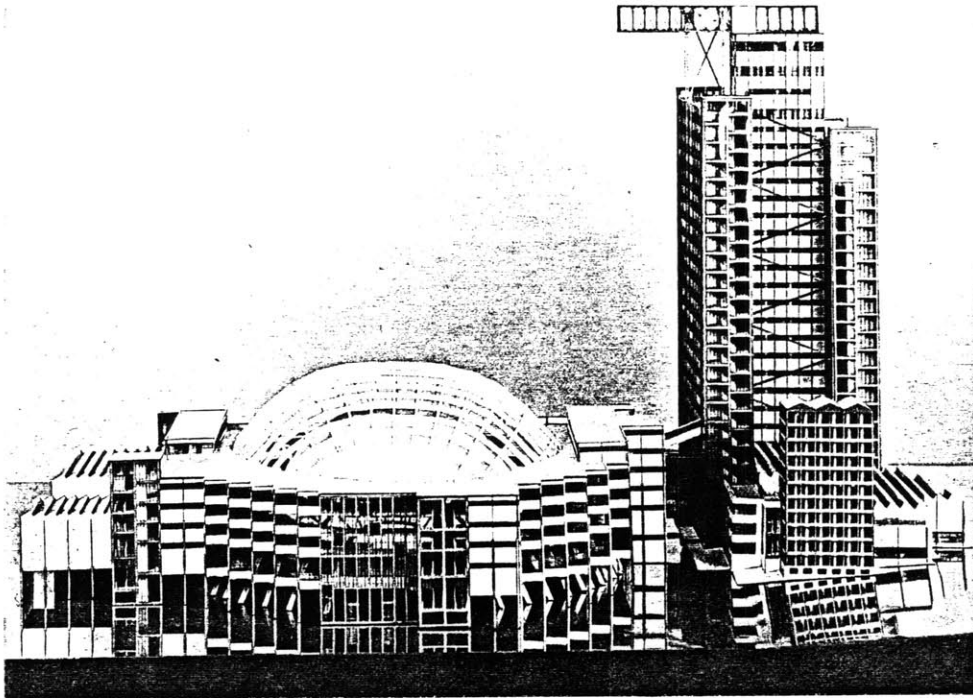
304. League of Nations, site plan
305. Hans Wittwer, League of Nations,
preliminary sketch



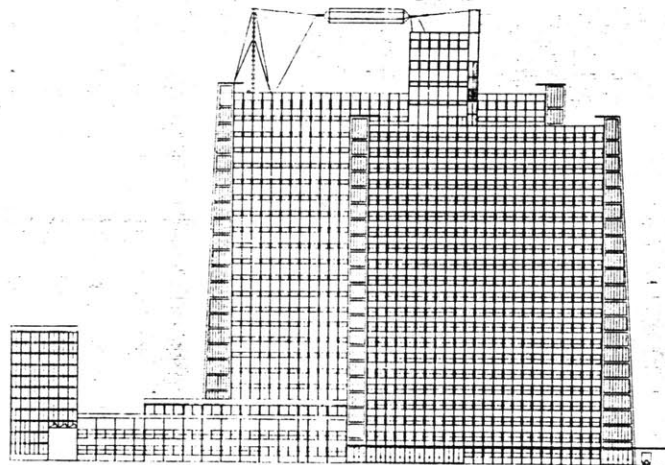
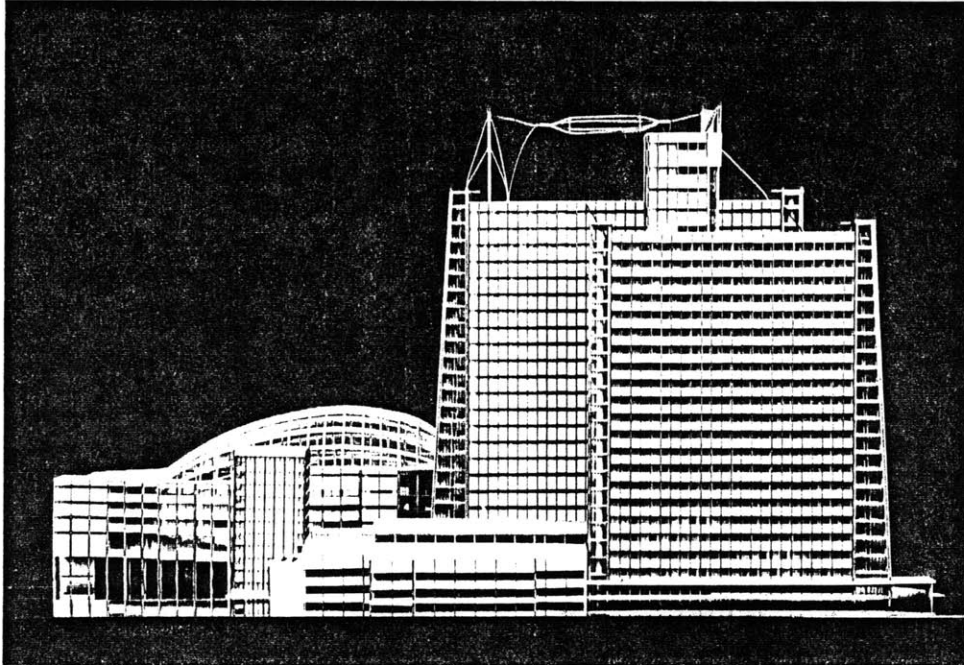
306. League of Nations, ground plan
307. Mezzanine plan



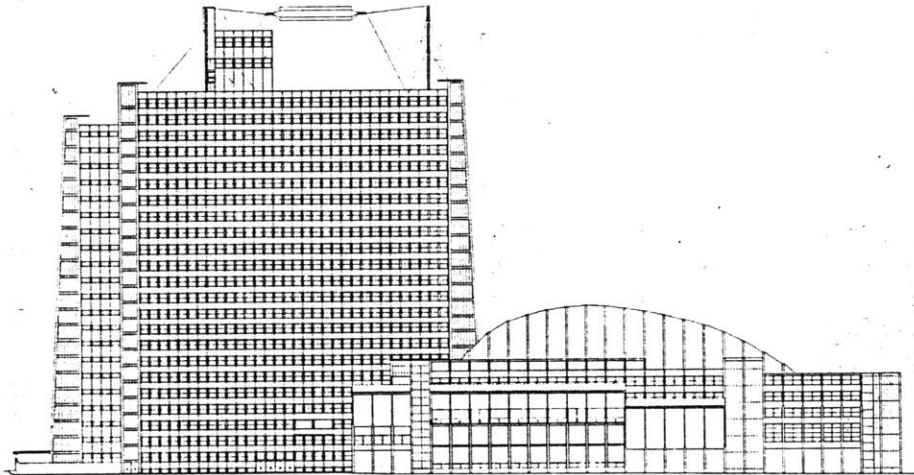
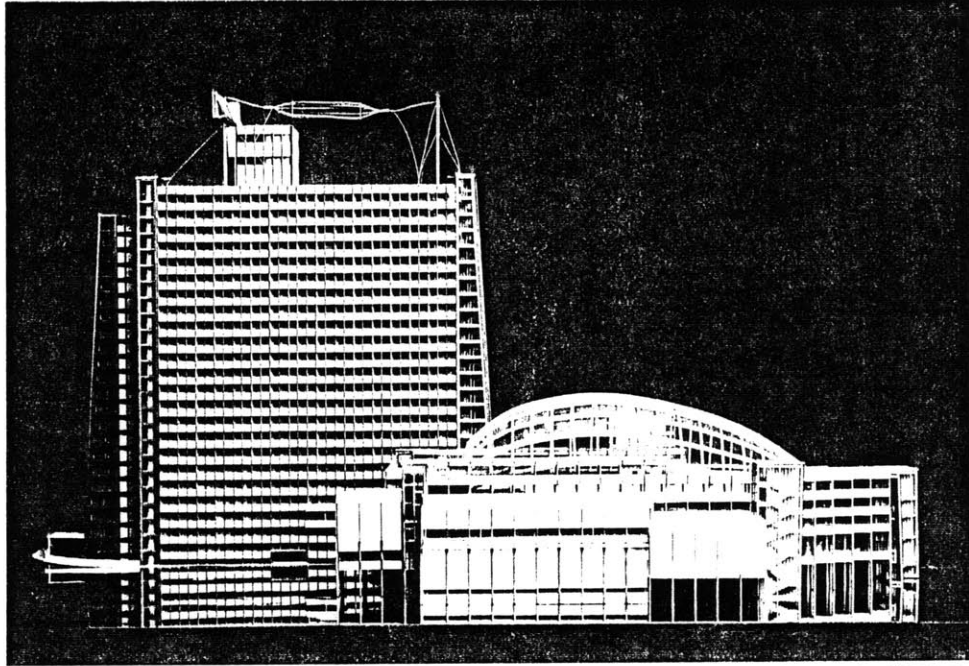
308. View of south elevation of model
(model constructed for 1989 exhibition)
309. South elevation



310. View of north elevation of model
311. North elevation

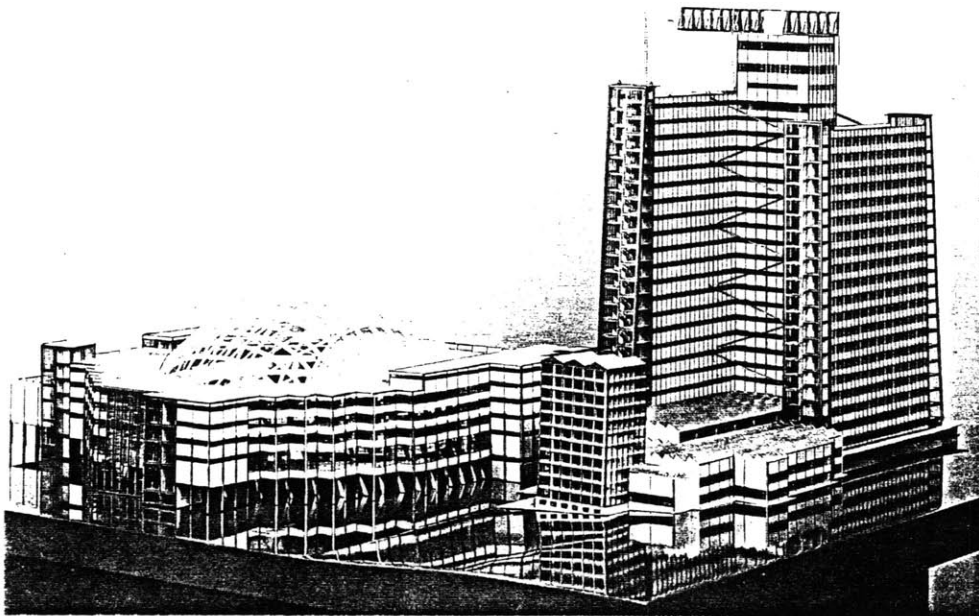
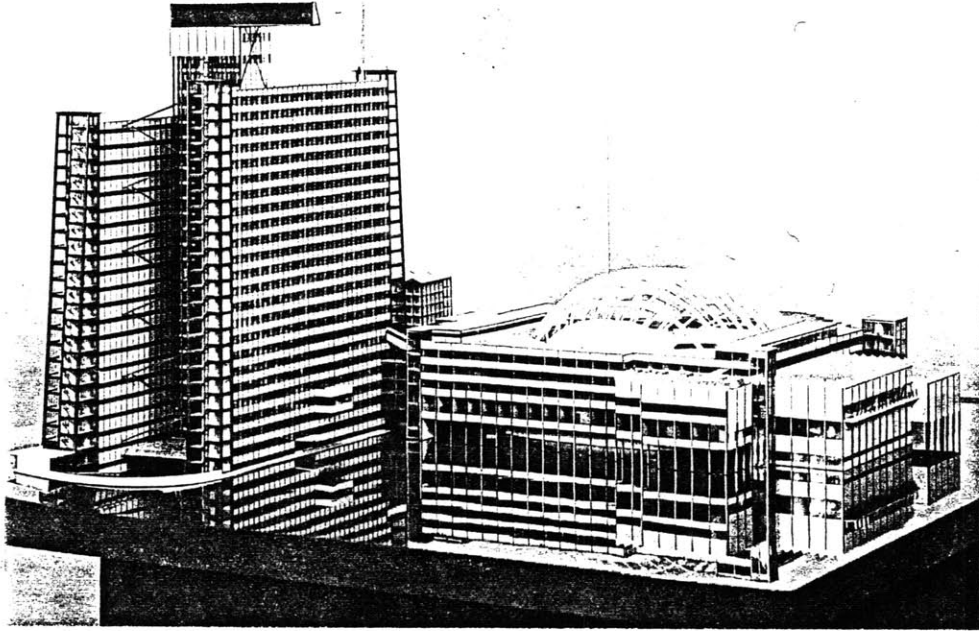


312. View of west elevation of model
313. West elevation

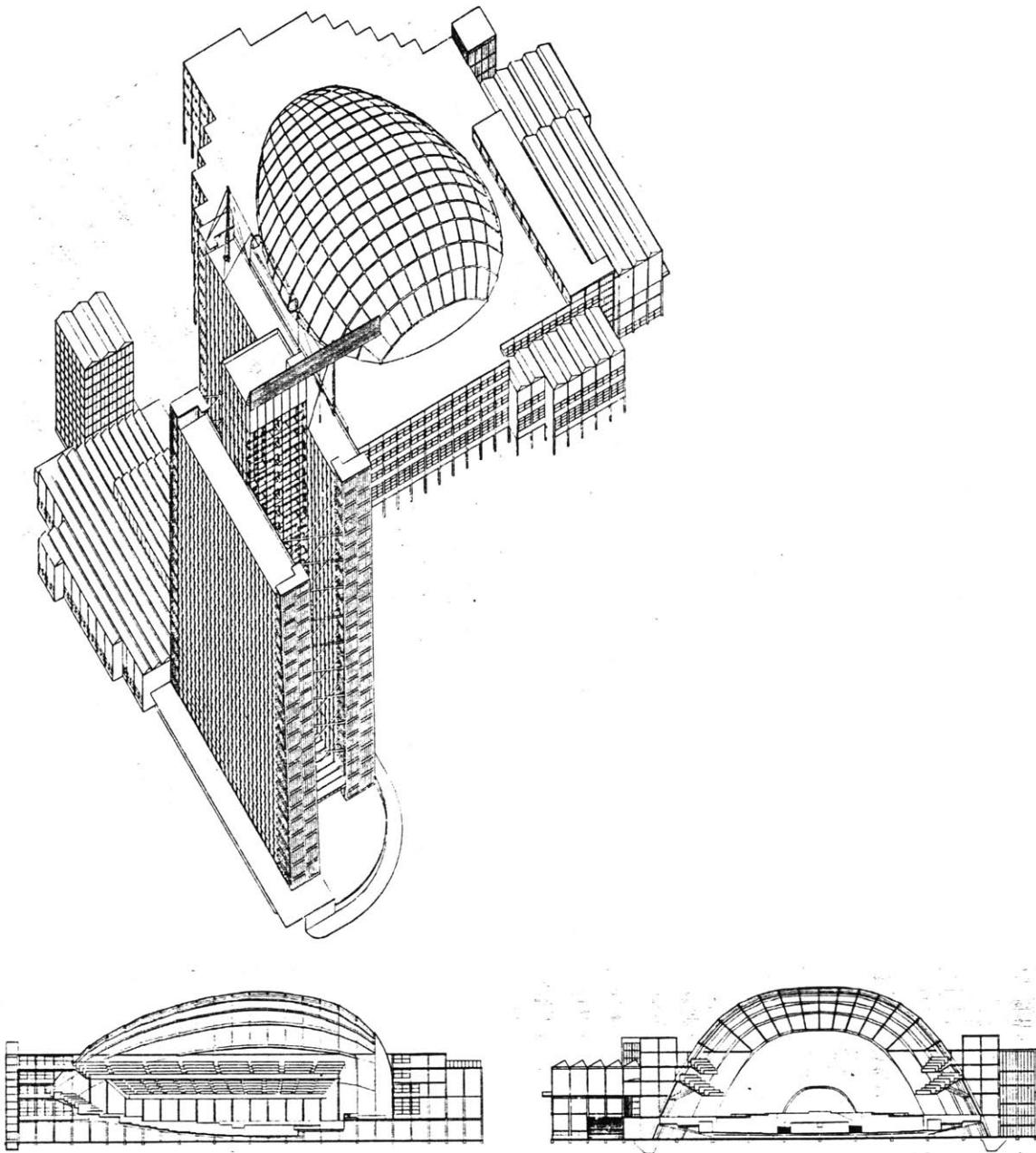


314. View of east elevation of model
315. East elevation

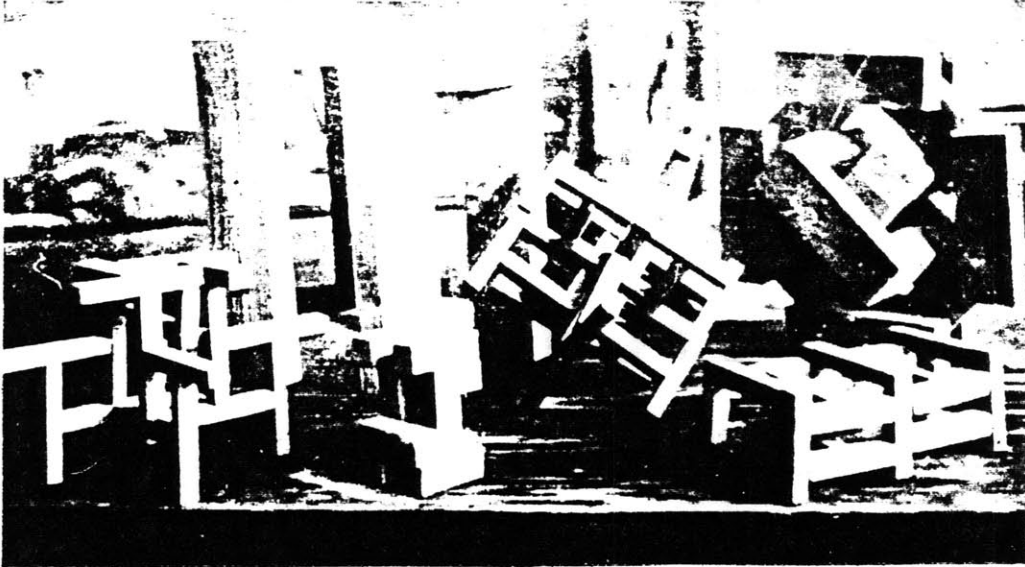
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316. View of model, southeast
317. View of model, northwest



318. Axonometric
319. Sections through auditorium

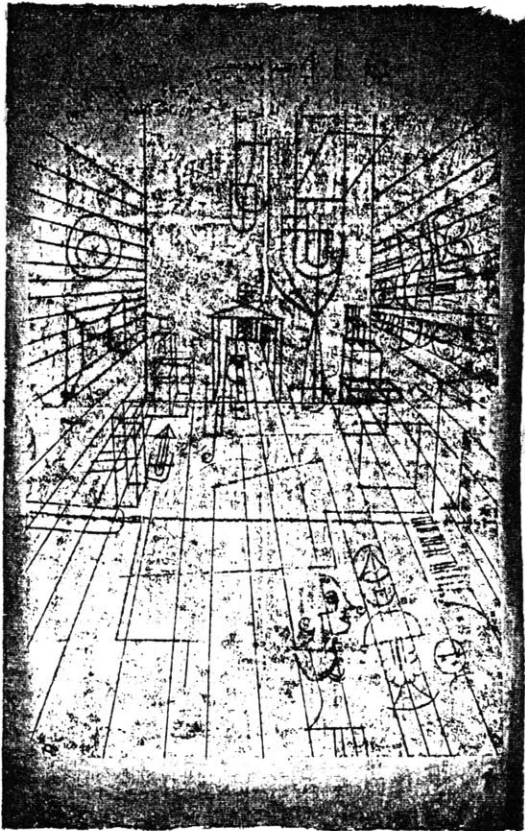
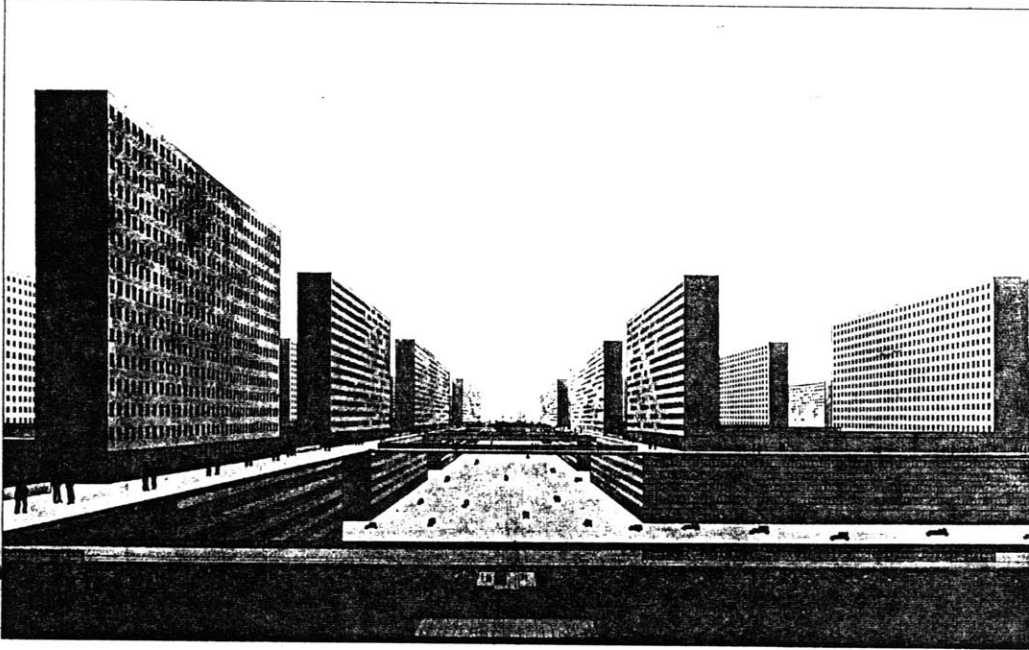


320. Alexander Rodchenko, Spatial
Constructions

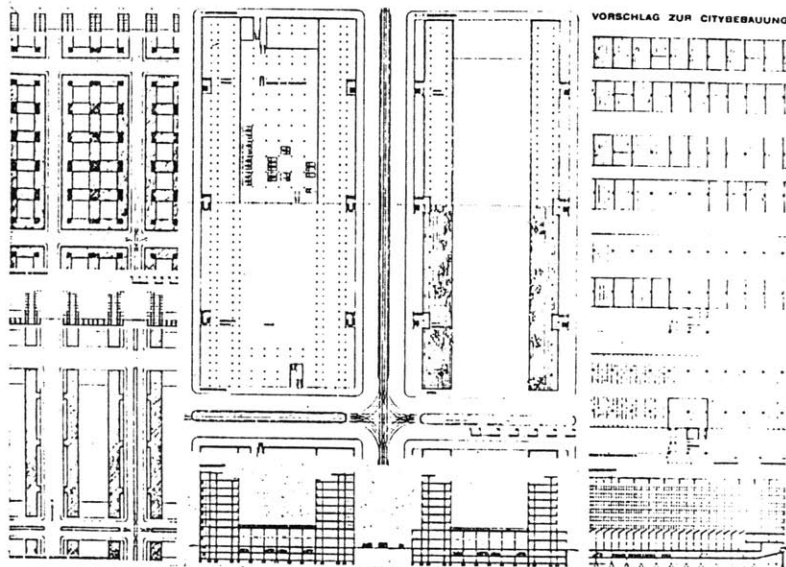
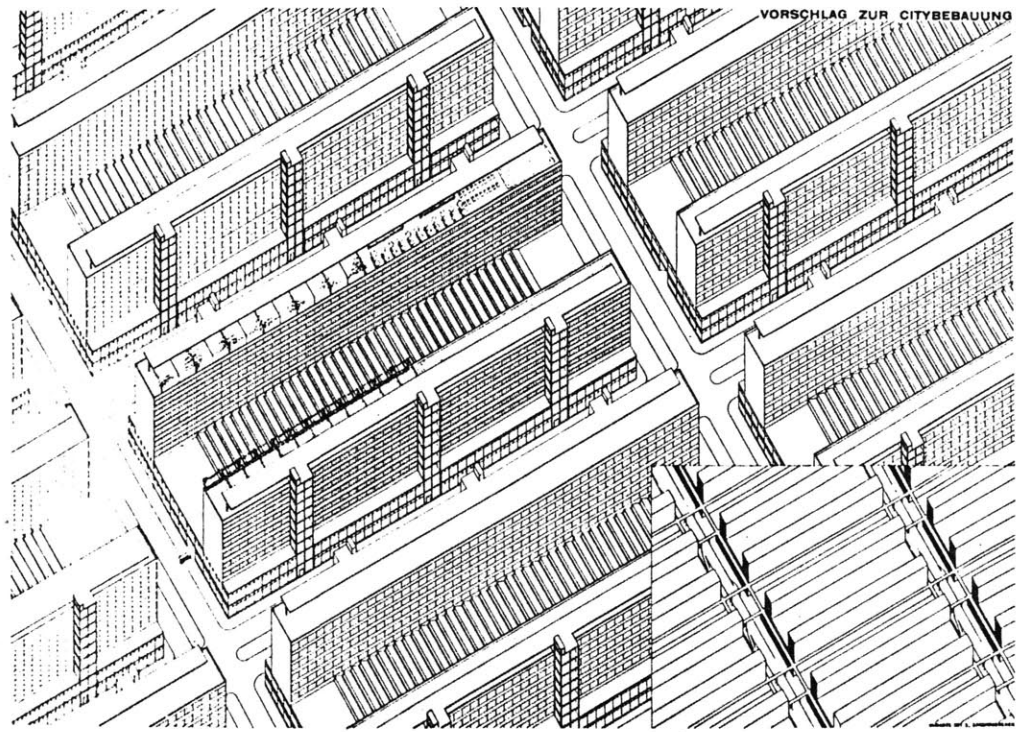
321. Alexander Rodchenko, Hanging
Construction



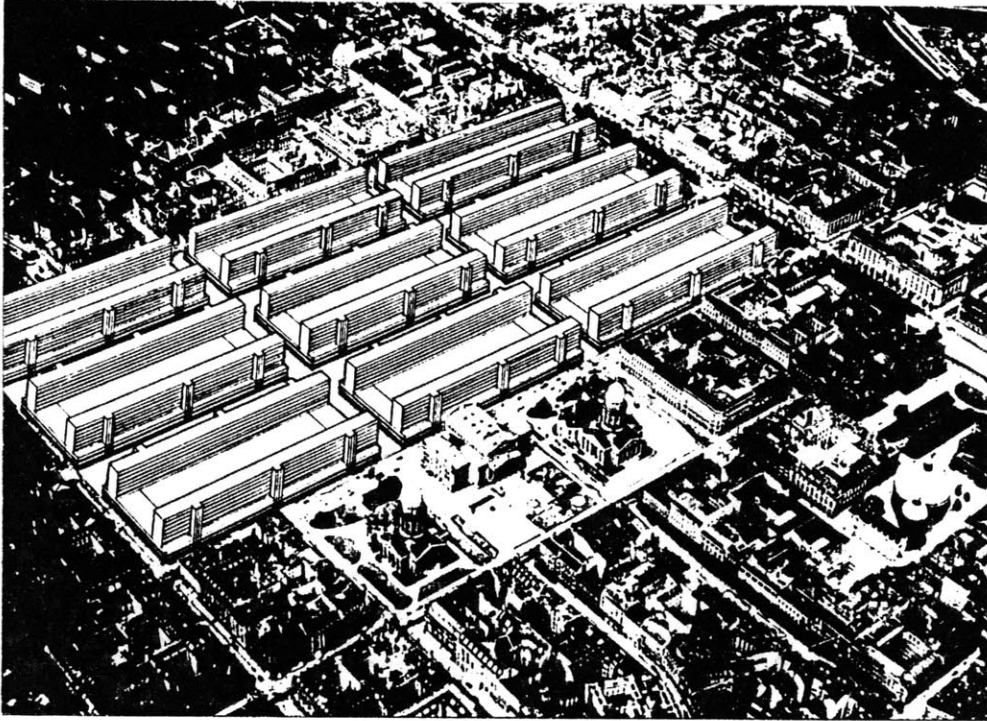
322. Hannah Hoch, Cut with the Kitchen Knife, photomontage, 1919



323. Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hochhausstadt project, 1924, perspective
324. Paul Klee, Room Perspective with Inhabitants, 1921



325. Hilberseimer, Vorschlag zur Citybebauung, 1930; (a) axonometric with insert of alternative scheme, (b) plan



326. Hilberseimer, project for the construction of a city applied to the center of Berlin, 1928, photomontage



327. Hilberseimer standing before a model of a tower made of six fifteen-story buildings from the "Welfare City" project, 1927

**IV. Ludwig Hilberseimer
and the Inscription of
the Paranoid Subject**

Interjection

*Herr Bertolt Brecht maintains: a man is a man.
And that is something anyone can prove.
But then, Herr Bertolt Brecht also proves
That one can do as much as one likes with a person.
Here this evening, a man will be reassembled like a car
Without losing anything in the process.
The man will be approached humanely
He will be requested firmly, without vexation
To accomodate himself to the course of the world
And to let his private fish swim away.
And no matter what he is remodeled into,
In doing so no mistake has been made.
One can, if we do not watch over him,
also make him overnight into our butcher.
Herr Bertolt Brecht hopes that you will see the ground
On which you stand disappear like snow under your feet
And that you will notice about the packer Galy Gay
That life on earth is dangerous.*

Bertolt Brecht, "Mann ist Mann," *Erste Stücke*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1953), 229-20

Ludwig Hilberseimer and the Inscription of the Paranoid Subject

Within the discourse of modernism has developed a critical practice, associated with an ongoing tradition of humanism, which confines a "correct" reading of an architectural object to an acceptance of the position from which the settled unity of the immanent characteristics of the object has precedence over its unsettling external historical and ideological determinants: the position of a transcendental subject. Recent critical theory has challenged this increasingly apparent stasis in humanist thinking from an antihumanist vantagepoint that is definitively tied to a *post*modernism in which the intrinsic uncertainty and disunity of processes of signification are stressed.¹ It has been my argument in the preceding sections of this thesis that a rigorous antihumanist trajectory can be found historically within modern architecture. At this point, however, I wish to begin to elaborate the suggestion of section III that certain points along such a trajectory prove at times to be less unambiguously fruitful than one might hope. For the decoding and dismantling of the older forms of experience, such as the transcendent or the sacred, and the substitution of new forms of standardization, reification, and planification of both subject and object pose crippling problems for architectural practice.

¹Jacques Derrida, for example, criticizes the postulation of an untouchable transcendental center outside the structure of a system of signification, which does the structuring: "...the structurality of structure... has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was... above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *freeplay* of the structure... the center closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes possible.... it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality... The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality... the totality *has its center elsewhere*.... With this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game...." Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 247-48. To Derrida's critique of structuralism, one could add Foucauldian and Lacanian scholarship and criticism as examples of what I am calling postmodern antihumanism.

And modernism's various attempts to invent new and elaborate, desacralized and critical formal strategies with which to figure, if not resolve, what seemed to be the utter incompatibility between the emerging social structure and individual lived experience are each differently marked by their immersion into a radically discontinuous and fragmenting reality.

The orders of those strategies range from structural intimations of a classless society of prehistory — of which the work of Hannes Meyer is an example — to the lingering phenomenological spaces of the now threatened bourgeois private subject — of which the work of Adolf Loos is, I have argued, an example — to the decentering and complete dispersion of this last. The different forces of the two latter stigmatizations can be felt (once again, perhaps) in the comparison of two such attempts at figuration with which I begin this section.

After looking closely at the formal characteristics of Hilberseimer's posthumanist architecture in this first part — its less than consequential circuit of signs — we will want to return in the second part to the question of the status of the subject as inscribed by Hilberseimer in his theoretical writings, especially on expressionism and dadaism. It will then emerge that the ambiguity and dissolution found in his architectural representations are not at all inconsistent with the crisis of humanist subjectivity which they ultimately represent. Finally, in the last part of this section, I shall attempt to bring together Hilberseimer's formal research with his theorization of the subject in the place from which both arise: the special context of Weimar Germany. My argument will be that hovering, depleted architectural signs Hilberseimer puts forth are contradictorily conceived. They are at once ciphers of an as-yet-unachieved utopia

and historical productions of the special and especially anguished sensibility of Weimar culture. They are a defense against the reality from which they emerge and an attempt to construct another reality from the hidden (or repressed) signs of the first. In this, I shall argue, they share the cognitive structure of paranoia, though I will have to go some way in my analysis before I will be able to substantiate this claim. Nevertheless, the neutralization of subject and object on which this paranoia is predicated has already been glimpsed in the total unification of architecture and the rationalized socioeconomic structure of the city as analyzed in the previous section. Because the figures of redemption can no longer be thought from within the concept of individual human agency, Hilberseimer must posit their forms in external aesthetic objects generated by supra-individual forces. These objects have the appearance of wholeness, but it is the wholeness of a totally administered world. In this section of the thesis the corrosive consequences of Hilberseimer's totalization will be charted.

The Crisis of Humanism and the Dissolution of the Object

The rather startling images of Mies van der Rohe's 1919-1922 skyscraper projects (figs. 401, 403, 404, and 405) comprise two basic architectural strategies. One is a building surface qualified no longer by patterns of shadow on an opaque material but by the reflections and refractions of light by glass. The other is a building form conceived not in terms of separate, articulated masses related to one another by some measurable grid, but as a complex unitary volume that does not permit itself to be read as emanating from a purely internal formal logic.² With these two related propositions Mies put into crisis the cognitive status of the humanist object and the corresponding conception of the subject as an ideal, unified, centered monad contemplating the abstract unity of that object.

Against the autonomous formal object of humanism — in which the viewer can grasp in purely mental space an antecedent logic, deciphering the relationships between its parts and connecting every part to a coherent formal theme — the alternative posited

²Though the revelation of the steel structure of the skyscraper has often been emphasized, Mies himself verifies the importance of viewing the shimmering glass wall and the registration of the contingencies of the site over the demonstration of the building's skeleton. He writes, "My efforts with an actual glass model helped me to recognize that the most important thing about using glass is not the effects of light and shadow, but the rich play of reflection.... A superficial examination might suggest that the curved outline of the plan is arbitrary. This was determined, however, by a concern for the illumination of the interior, for the massing of the building as viewed from the street, and for the play of reflections. The only fixed points of the plan are adjusted to the needs of the building and designed to be carried out in glass." Mies van der Rohe, "Hochhaus Projekt für Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse in Berlin," *Frühlicht* 1 (Summer 1922): 122-24

by Mies is an object intractable to decoding by an analysis of what is only immanent and apparent. The glass curtain wall — alternately transparent, reflective, or refractive depending on light conditions and viewing positions — absorbs, mirrors, or distorts the immediate, constantly changing images of city life, and foregrounds the context as a physical and conceptual frame for understanding the building. And if our reading of Mies's project is thus far largely phenomenological, it is that very phenomenological reality of the metropolis that throws humanist conceptions of the subject into question, even as it is the vestiges of humanist thought that allow the reality to be gauged as unsatisfactory.

An interpretation of the phenomenal context of the Friedrichstrasse is offered by Georg Grosz in a drawing of 1918 (fig. 402). The drawing recalls Simmel's description of the *Nervenleben* of the metropolis and the fetishization of its products as "the intensification of nervous stimulation" resulting from the "rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions. These are the psychological conditions which the metropolis creates." The typical consequence of this *Nervenleben*, according to Simmel, is a blasé attitude — a blunting of discrimination, an indifference to value, a general languor.

In this phenomenon the nerves find in the refusal to react to their stimulation the last possibility of accommodating to the contents and forms of metropolitan life. The preservation of certain personalities is bought at the price of devaluating the

The Crisis of Humanism and the Dissolution of the Object

whole objective world, a devaluation which in the end unavoidably drags one's own personality down into a feeling of the same worthlessness.³

This is the reality reflected in the surface of Mies's skyscraper, and the context it focuses and disturbs. The convex, faceted surfaces are perceptually contorted by the invasion of circumstantial images, while the reflection each concavity receives on its surface is that of its own shadow, creating gaps which exacerbate the disarray. These surface distortions accompany and accentuate the formal inscrutability of the volumetric configuration. It is impossible, for example, to reduce the whole to a number of constituent parts related by some internal armature or transformed through some formal operation; indeed, no such compositional relationships exist. Neither is it possible to explicate the object as a deflection from some formal type; Mies has rejected the meanings that such mimetic design methods tend to promote. The very body of the building contorts to assume the form demanded by the contingent configuration of the site and to register the circumstantial images of the context. Mies thus invests meaning in a sense of surface and volume that the building assumes in a particular time and place, in a contextually qualified moment, continuous with and dependent upon the world in which the viewer actually moves. This sense of surface, severed from the knowledge of an internal order or a unifying logic characteristic of humanist architecture, is enough to wrench the building from the atemporal, idealized realm of

³Georg Simmel, "Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben" (Dresden, 1903); translated as "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950), 409-24.

autonomous form and install it in a specific situation in the real world of experienced time, open to all the chance and uncertainty of life in the metropolis.

Mies here exemplifies what we have already seen to be the central strategy of antihumanist thought: against the *a priori* categories of rational understanding, in which the mind is supposed to have a preformed and permanent structure that parcels out the objects of experience, it is now the temporal, historically developed, and irrational structure of society which is determinant. Adorno — rewriting Marx's dictum that philosophy is not a "matter of logic" (*Sache der Logik*), but the "logic of the matter" (*Logik der Sache*) — puts the point succinctly: "The fetish character of commodities [the reality of the metropolis] is not a fact of consciousness, but dialectic in the eminent sense that it produces consciousness."⁴ For Adorno, as for Mies, the renunciation of humanist subjectivity is consequent to an act of "immersion in particularity,"⁵ of the subject giving itself over to the object (in Mies's case the city), which leads not to the subject's self-discovery but to the discovery of a social structure in a particular historical configuration. Yet Adorno further insists that the subject, though it yields to the object, does not leave it unchanged. Rather the subject actively and interpretively rearranges the elements of reality in an "exact fantasy,"⁶ as if to pin down and register

⁴Theodor Adorno, in a letter to Walter Benjamin of 1935, in Adorno, *Über Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 112

⁵Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973 [orig. German 1966]), 28

⁶Adorno called "an exact fantasy" of reality a "fantasy which abides within the material which the sciences present to it, and reaches beyond them only in the smallest aspects of their arrangement: aspects, granted, which fantasy itself must originally generate." Theodor Adorno, "Die Aktualität der Philosophie" (1931), in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 341. An exact fantasy is "scientific" in its refusal to remove itself from the technical logic of the medium of architecture, yet, as an active rearrangement of that logic, it

the factuality that controls its thought, in a construction of cognitive as well as artistic import.

It is in this sense of the artistic object as a cognitive mechanism that Mies's skyscraper project can be identified with Kurt Schwitter's Merz Column in Hanover begun the same year (fig. 407). Both projects share an antagonism toward *a priori* and reasoned order. Both plunge into the chaos of the metropolis to seek another order within it through a systematic use of the unexpected, the aleatory, the inexplicable. Both are objects in crisis. They attest to the fact that the humanist conceptions of formal rationality and self-creating subjectivity cannot cope with the irrationality of actual experience. In the modern city, such constructs of rationality fail to function, and the mind, the subject, is consequently unable to perceive a pattern in the chaos. At such a moment, the subject has its one opportunity to escape reification: by thinking through, with some critical distance, what it is that *causes* reality to appear to be only a collection of fragmented images; by looking for structures and processes operating in time behind what appears to be given and objectified; by constructing, in an aesthetic modality, a cognitive mechanism understood "as a dialectically entwined and explicatively undecipherable unity of concept and matter."⁷ Crisis, in short, is converted into a critical mediation between various levels of form and its social context.⁸ And the other aspect of Mies's "exact fantasy" — the thick, black, silent

is a controlled effort to split open the real by striking its elements against each other with the force of the imagination.

⁷Theodor Adorno, "Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen," in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 369

⁸Here I intend to invoke an Althusserian understanding that architecture is not simply a free-floating object in its own right, nor does it mirror some base, context, or ground and simply replicate the latter ideologically; but that the object possesses some "semi-autonomous" force with which it can also be seen as negating that context. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in

elevational drawing (fig. 405) — attempts to negate the status quo, asserting itself as a radically different, subversive object within an unsatisfactory social and physical fabric.⁹

The turn to the objective effects of modern industrial capitalism, to its structures and processes understood as factors of form making, and to the construction of some kind of causality among the levels of social experience, new modes and materials of production, and architectural form: this is also the similarity between Mies's 1922 skyscraper project and Ludwig Hilberseimer's Chicago Tribune project of the same year (fig. 408). The distinction between them, however, is the different terms in which these mutual relationships are grasped — the difference between the *displacement* and criticism of the social subtext by form, as is the case with Mies and Schwitters, and the *absorption* or envelopment of this subtext into form, as is the case with Hilberseimer. A definite epistemological shift separates the two, and it is this shift that will concern us here. For I believe, and will try to argue, that the shift is nothing less than the beginning of an era of *postsignification*. By this term I mean not only the abolition of architecture as a communicative action or representational practice, not only the evacuation of significations and subjectifications from the domain of architecture, but

Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (London and New York: New Left Books, 1971). I must gloss over some problems with my use of the Althusserian term "mediation." For a discussion see Jameson's introduction to *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 23 ff.

⁹Mies's radical engagement with irrationality and chaos, his framing of circumstance, at once anguished and exhilarated, perhaps begins and ends here in the skyscraper projects: his later work emphasizes again and again its ambition to salvage the purity of high art from the encroachment of urbanization, massification, technological modernization, in short, of modern mass culture. Mies's contact, at this time in his career, with the *G* group, the expressionist, and the Berlin dadaists including Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, and Kurt Schwitters may account for his momentary plunge into particularity of postwar Berlin.

also the negation of all dimensions of critique and conscious resistance available to architectural practice (a condition of which, I would assert incidentally and polemically, we are presently the heirs).

Mies's skyscraper is a sign still laden with meaning — projective, referential, intrusive — in a negative dialogue with the context of its production, one that is sustained at formal and cognitive levels. Hilberseimer's project, on the other hand, begins not with some notion of context or situation to which it is a critical response, but rather with a technical principle dissimulated as an architectural configuration. As we have seen in the previous section, the technical principle is cellular reproduction. As hypothesized by Hilberseimer, modern building construction requires that each building unit — each structural and spatial cell — be identical to all others, not in a linear series, but in a multi-dimensional matrix of repetitive cells; and the gap between the urban order and the individual cell is thereby abolished.

In Hilberseimer's projects there seems at first to be a degree of transparency of architectural form to the conditions of its making — building as an exhibition of industrialized technology reduced to an elementary, reiterative structural and constructional system. It is this which has been taken as Hilberseimer's *Sachlichkeit* or functionalism. Hilberseimer's own writings sanction such interpretations. In a section of Groszstadtarchitektur entitled "Hochhausbauten," for example, he argues:

Architecture is based fundamentally on an enabling construction [*ermöglichenden Konstruktion*]. More recent architecture in particular, by virtue of the rationalism that inspires it, has almost completely identified itself with pure structure and construction, whereas in the past cultural and sacral

needs played a much more predominant role compared to the rational use that the building was to be put to.¹⁰

And commenting on Mies's project for a concrete office building in the last sentence of a previous chapter, he asserts, "Form and construction have become the same thing [*sind unmittelbar eins geworden*]." ¹¹

But it must be recognized that this architecture is not really a demonstration of the technical, social, or economic conditions that produced it. On the contrary, Hilberseimer's architecture effectively truncates the complex network of colliding forces in which architecture originates to present us with a self-generating model that obeys only its own logic. It conceals the real origins and stories of a building's formation with an erased record, a kind of materiality that can communicate nothing detached from itself. And yet, *it can engender itself*. For instance, where Mies renders the context of his building antagonistically — the low, pitched roofed buildings in black silhouette in the drawing; the slightly melting masses in the model — Hilberseimer, in the Chicago Tribune project, reduces the context to two short lines across the page — a horizon or an edge. His building does not measure itself against its context as a negative instance, but rather absorbs the context into its own system; or better, the context itself issues from the same system. And then there are two towers, less a plastic manipulation of volume than a reduplication of the modular system indefinitely repeated in ignorance of all circumstance. The signified and the referent are now dissolved by a generalized code that no longer refers back to any real but rather to its

¹⁰Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur* (Stuttgart: Verlag Julius Hoffmann, 1927)

¹¹*Ibid.*, 61

own logic. Bluntly put, the signifier becomes its own referent. As Jean Baudrillard has written, "For the sign to be pure, it has to duplicate itself: it is the duplication of the sign which destroys meaning."¹²

There is a lack of articulation here in Hilberseimer's project. The typology of American skyscrapers — repetitive towers on a high base as exemplified by McKim, Mead, and White's Pennsylvania Hotel in New York, which Hilberseimer published in Groszstadtarchitektur (fig. 409)¹³ — is reduced in the Chicago Tribune to its most elementary structure. The street facade is distinguished from other sides only by the recess of the door and the slightly lower sill of the windows. At the top of the drawing, where the declarative edge of the building's top would meet the sky, the technique becomes more linear; the two lines that form this edge meet precisely at the border of the paper. This, along with the perspective distortion and tonal reversals change the whole disposition of the form, dissolving the volume into two depthless planes and converting the projecting exterior corner into what might be taken as a receding interior. The surface of the glass is gone; now we see only the blankness of the page through the empty openings.

A comparison of Hilberseimer's language of drawing with that of Heinrich Maria Dauringhausen, "The Profiteer," 1920-21 (fig. 410), or with Georg Grosz's "Untitled," 1920 (fig. 411), is inescapable, and it is a language Hilberseimer was to employ throughout his early career: the reduced surfaces, windows as opaque swaths barely adhering to the exterior surface of the building, the absence of glass from the

¹²Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 136

¹³The project was illustrated in Groszstadtarchitektur on page 65.

window openings, the relentless repetition and starkness of the environment. But Hilberseimer defused the critical mechanisms of such painting and drawing and sought to demonstrate the availability of the language for use in constructing positive information. His previously worked-out theory of pure form — which we will consider in more detail later but may now polemically be staged — understands form as that which reunites the creative process with the conditions of modern building in a definitive figuration absolved from the need to register the heteronomy of preliminary operations it claims to comprehend. This theory provided a readily available conceptual framework to be fitted-out with the floating icons and atmospheres of the *Großstadt* as enunciated by his Berlin colleagues.

These are the visual effects of Hilberseimer's cellular reproduction, the visible signs of the closure of his system. But let it be stressed that what is at issue here is not the exchange of one image of reality, one "exact fantasy," for another, as with Mies, but of substituting signs of the real *for the real itself*, a strategy that subsumes every contingency and defers every connection with the historical, technical, or social specificity to its simulated double. The very external ground against which figuration may be understood is absorbed into the figure.

So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. The latter starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the *utopia* of this principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it

as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum.¹⁴

Moreover, it should be made clear that this architectural system of reduplicated molecular elements without origin is viewed by Hilberseimer himself as an elementarist substitute for any metaphysical fullness, or "cultural or sacral needs" of "community religiousness" as sought by the expressionists. He writes,

The few projects made by Berlin architects for the Chicago Tribune competition fall in [a] period of transition. The projects of Gropius and Max Taut reveal a change from the fantastic to the rational, while that of Bruno Taut is still extravagant in appearance. My own project, though not submitted to the competition, was published in G and may be considered, in its extreme puritanism, as a protest against the formal exuberance of the Expressionists.... As the trend of our time is toward the secular, so is the trend of contemporary architecture. Its theme are all those building types which the Expressionists considered inferior to become objects of architecture.... To develop adequate types for them according to their purpose and function, the materials used and the structures employed, constitute the real problems which the Elementarists have to solve. This will lead to an architecture which is direct and free from all romantic reminiscences, in agreement with present daily life, not subjective and individualistic, but objective and universal.¹⁵

The protest against expressionism is fundamental to the development of Hilberseimer's theory of architecture. We must take up this topic, too, in more detail

¹⁴Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 11; emphasis in original.

¹⁵Hilberseimer, *The Berlin School of Architecture of the Twenties* MS (orig. German 1967), (Ludwig Karl Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, series 8/1, box 7/10), 49-51

later. For now, what is important is the way in which the language of causality found in Hilberseimer's theoretical writings (for example, "architecture is based fundamentally on an enabling construction") gives way to a different parallelism between form and its constructional-material determinants in his design work, permitting Hilberseimer to ellide the terminology of the first to the second: to speak of the logic of simulation in terms of "the laws of matter." There are instances where Hilberseimer's own language betrays the process of dissimulation:

The conformation of material content according to an idea means at the same time conformation of the ideal content according to the laws of matter. In the meeting of both of these moments in a single form architecture is born.... *It liberates material and ideal contents from their initial contexts.* And it reunifies them. It joins them according to precise laws.¹⁶

Indeed, the liberation and reunification of subject (idea) and object (matter) according to the precise laws of the simulacrum. If the Chicago Tribune project is taken as an instantiation of this "liberation" of subject and object, the degree of abstraction necessary to permit such a sublation can readily be felt. Idea and matter are dissolved into sheer formal relationality, into purely formal categories and systems. In contrast to Mies's skyscraper, it is now no longer a question of form providing a way of entering into the real, no longer a strategy of displacement, but of absorption; no longer resistance, but mask. It is when this transformation from causality to parallelism to simulation is fully accomplished that architecture will contribute to the complete

¹⁶Hilberseimer, "Grossstadtarchitektur", in *Der Sturm* 15, n. 4 (1924): 177-189; quotation on 177-178; my emphasis

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suppression of the human subject, of questions of actual experience, context, and history; and, ultimately, an engendering without a subject — without individual human agency or history — will become the posthumanist norm.

Now, this is all very close to what Jean Baudrillard characterizes as the passage from representational objects to the "hyperreality" of our own late-twentieth-century present.

The description of this whole intimate universe [of objects] — projective, imaginary and symbolic — still corresponded to the object's status as mirror of the subject, and that in turn to the imaginary depths of the mirror and "scene": there is a domestic scene, a scene of interiority, a private space-time (correlative, moreover, to a public space). The oppositions subject/object and public/private were still meaningful. This was the era of the discovery and exploration of daily life, this other scene emerging in the shadow of the historic scene, with the former receiving more and more symbolic investment as the latter was politically disinvested.... But today the scene and mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold — the smooth operational surface of communication.¹⁷

Perhaps, then, a case could be made for reading Hilberseimer not as a paragon of modernism, but rather as an anticipation of that later and quite different thing we have come to call postmodernism. Certainly the self-generating sequence of forms for which function and construction are mere pretexts, the realization of a formal mechanism,

¹⁷Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), 126-27

depersonalized and virtually unauthored, in which the aleatory and seemingly uncontrollable and unverifiable generation of new forms obeys a logic of its own — all this is very close, as I have been trying to make it out, to recent work variously called "simulationist," or postmodernist. But I want to argue, to the contrary, for its historical specificity. For Hilberseimer's architecture, I will try to show, can be conceived only as a production of, and a response to, the very particular conditions of the Weimar Republic. I want to demonstrate that, having first recognized the determining conditions for a certain historically specific type of subjectivity, which I have broached in the analysis of Hannes Meyer as a radical and potentially critical kind of antihumanism, Hilberseimer's modernism itself increasingly hollowed out such subjectivity and rendered its articulation as a critical agency highly problematic.

Hilberseimer's art critical writings

I shall approach my topic through an analysis of the writings of Hilberseimer, published for the most part in 1919 in Der Einzige,¹⁸ a journal edited by admirers of the nineteenth-century German anarcho-individualist Max Stirner, and his follower (in their opinion) Friedrich Nietzsche; and between 1920-24, in the Sozialistische Monatshefte, a paper which followed Eduard Bernstein in advocating an accommodating, evolutionary

¹⁸Hilberseimer's articles, all published in volume 1 (1919), were: "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," Jan. 19, p. 46; "Umwertung in der Kunst," Jan. 26, pp. 24-25; "Form und Individuum," Feb. 2, pp. 30-31; "Der Naturalismus und das Primitive in der Kunst," March 9, pp. 88-89; "Kunst und Wissen," March 30, pp. 127-28. I shall also frequently refer to a longer work, also entitled "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, c. 1922 (Ludwig Karl Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, series 8/3, box 1/10). This 41 page manuscript is the synthesis of many of Hilberseimer's earlier articles and the source for many later ones. The strategy of repetition extends to Hilberseimer's writings: yet another version was published with the same title in Sozialistische Monatshefte 28, no. (1922): 993-997. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

policy of socialism, and for which Hilberseimer was the art critic.¹⁹ Hilberseimer's articles, as we shall see, elaborate Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy — in terms of the epistemological status of art, the notion of the artist as a prophetic leader, and the concept of chaos as the constitutive condition of the eternal return — and assimilate these ideas to Alois Riegl's assertion that the art of all cultures is measured by their *Kunstwollen*. The conjunction of Nietzsche and Riegl will become key in Hilberseimer's "total solution."

There are several stresses found throughout Hilberseimer's theoretical and critical writings worth distinguishing by way of introduction. First is the resolutely epistemological thrust of his concerns. A large part of what is at stake in his essays is an assessment of the status of our knowledge and the characterization of the distinction between scientific and artistic knowledge, or as Nietzsche put it, of "the raging discord between art and truth."²⁰ Following Nietzsche, Hilberseimer asserts that art has no less a claim to knowledge than science, for "all of science [*Wissenschaft*], in the final end, depends on faith. Prerequisite [*Voraussetzung*] of all of science are believed truths. Ultimate precisions are always affairs of belief and find their roots in religions, which connect inseparably the finite with the infinite."²¹ Science delivers (*liefert*) the material of thought; it is analytic, searching in the parts and pieces of the external world for knowledge of the whole and tending, therefore, toward specialization and technical

¹⁹Hannes Meyer referred to Hilberseimer as a "socialist architect." See The Bauhaus, H. M. Wingler, ed., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 164. Hilberseimer would teach at the workers' school, the Kollektiv für sozialistisches Bauen, in 1931-32. Yet, there is no evidence in his writings that his socialism is anything more than routine for the times.

²⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (1886-88), Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. and eds. (New York: Random House, 1968), § 853

²¹Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 4

proficiency. Scientific knowledge is a form of retrieval, with cool precision, of the images and schema primordially superimposed on the world; and though it aims for objectivity, it remains necessarily partial, subjective, and derivative. In contrast, art, as positive creation, gives form to the very raw material of reality; it is comparably primary, holistic, and synthetic, and, "despite its subjective issue reaches the highest objectivity."²² Artistic knowledge enlarges the world, breaking down the narrow limits of conceptual, rational identities which tend to foreclose on polysemy. Above all,

creation is intuitive, free from laws. Creative work goes spontaneously with a legitimacy peculiar to it, derived from creativity. And all science and knowledge, all research and recognition-detection [*Erkennen* (sic)] cannot replace this naive security of creation. The new can therefore never be criticized for not following the old obsolete laws. Still less can creation itself serve extant laws. It does not know them at all. And if it should know them, it must first have overcome them in order to have come to creation.²³

²²Ibid., 4

²³Ibid., 11. Walter Benjamin criticized the emphasis on creativity over the properly destructive task of the artist in a way that is provocative for a comparison of Hilberseimer and Meyer. "For too long the accent was placed on creativity. People are creative to the extent that they avoid tasks and supervision. Work as a supervised task — its model: political and technical work — is attended by dirt and detritus, intrudes destructively into matter, is abrasive to what is already achieved, critical toward its conditions, and is in all this opposite to that of the dilettante luxuriating in creation. His work is innocent and pure, consuming and purifying masterliness. And therefore the monster stands among us as the messenger of a more real humanism. He is the conqueror of the empty phrase. He feels solidarity not with the slender pine but with the plane that devours it, not with the precious ore but with the blast furnace that purifies it. The average European has not succeeded in uniting his life with technology, because he has clung to the fetish of creative existence. One must have followed Loos in his struggle with the dragon "ornament," heard the stellar Esperanto of Scheerbart's creations or seen Klee's New Angel, who preferred to free men by taking from them, rather than make them happy by giving to them, to understand a humanity that proves itself by destruction. Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," in Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 272-73

It should be underscored that artistic creation is conceived here neither as formative power — as a development from *techné*, craft and artisanry, or science — nor as demiurgic production — as an imposition of form by an individual force — but rather as intuition. Art is ascribed not so much to a talent or faculty, classically conceived and destined to a signifying identification and function, as to compulsion, desire, and will. This is important because it already opens the way to a challenge both of the hubris of conventional bourgeois science and its positivist claim to knowledge into which much of the *neue Sachlichkeit* fell, and of the humanist conception of artistic creation as mimesis. But it also leaves open the question, to which we will return, What propels or constrains the will?

Neither is there in Hilberseimer's theory a notion of art as respite from the struggles and sufferings of reality, or as withdrawal from knowledge; art as a means of escape was not his emphasis, even though he continued to use the words like "banishment" and "magic" to describe art. The point, instead, is the Nietzschean one that science and art are *together* illusory and their epistemological status must be distinguished and judged on a basis altogether different from their descriptive powers. Or better, science and art are both involved with the production of images of the world, "appearances" as Nietzsche called them, and know-how (*Können*) leads us into the worse kind of self-blinded illusion, illusion that does not know itself to be one.

The opposition of science to art is figuratively realized in the antagonisms narrated in The Birth of Tragedy. Apollo, without the consciousness forced upon him by the "titanic and barbaric menace of Dionysius," gives birth to Socrates, or more precisely the Socratic principle, which condemns us to the grand self-delusion that the

rationality of classical mimesis has priority over intuition. Nietzsche's complaint against Socrates is directed not against reason *per se*, but against Socratic narrowness in regarding reason as the unique instrument of human knowledge and delivery. Hilberseimer extends this Nietzschean complaint to his own classicizing, formalizing, and functional-materialist opponents.

The art of recent times is still, in effect, only reproductive. The declining culture displaces elementary creation. Under the misunderstanding of what is essential, creativity is exhausted in schematized formalism. It is unspiritual [*ungeistig*]. Perfection is ultimately purely technical, decaying into bare imitation, going from the accidental to what we have already seen [*geht vom Zufälligen, nur Gesehenen aus*], leaving chaos in the chaotic. It is formless and arbitrary, exhausted in the superficiality of the thing, remaining content in the so-called beautiful appearance. Unbelievability, external appearance, skepticism, and the analytic are typical for recent times, in which knowledge and ability go over experience and will.²⁴

The second point to be stressed is what is seemingly a contradictory formulation of the structure of aesthetic totalization. Hilberseimer celebrates the Dionysian creative subject — unschooled, unrestrained, naive, natural — as that which represents the "original ground (*Urgrund*)"²⁵ of reality — a primitive and non-contingent substratum of being. The artistic subject reveals the contours of this reality, configures it in an art of invariant meaning — spontaneously and subconsciously created, a "magical banishment," "above time," "incapable of development," and antithetical to the art of

²⁴Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 32

²⁵*ibid.*, 9

the Apollonian self-consciousness which distances us psychically from reality in the arid compartments of beauty and proficiency (*Können*). "In creatively strong times art is confirmation, banishment, magic. The work signifies this through belief, true ideas, force and will, giving a total world picture [*Weltbild*]." ²⁶ Thus, Hilberseimer's aesthetic and epistemological formulations set forth, on the one hand, an ideal of relatively unrestrained contact with genuine experience (*Erlebnis*) or total content, and its passage through the creative subject into concrete form, presumably guaranteed by an explicit bracketing of material conditions and causes. Whether what is in question in an artwork is the symbol, the singularity, the intuitions, or the illusions, in every case what is established is an ontological and formal purity which transcends such encircling determinants as material, mode, technique, various historical contexts, rational consciousness, and the discursiveness of ordinary practice. Recall: "The creator, then, is intuitive, free from law.... And all science and knowledge, etc., cannot replace this naive security of creation."

On the other hand, Hilberseimer calls into question both uncircumstanced reality and, more significantly, the very notion of the antithesis between reality and its representation. "Extant laws" may not make art, art may produce rather than repeat reality, but art does not make itself alone. For while "the will to art [*Kunstwollen*], just as any will [*Wollen*], is not determinantly subjugated to development," it is, nevertheless, determined by the conditions of its epoch, and "another epoch disposes of [*verfügen über*] another will. The formal-becoming [*Formgewordene*] of this

²⁶Ibid., 31

expression [*Ausdruck*] just is the work of art."²⁷ Hilberseimer understands Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* as a complex and mediated relationship between subject and object, a "creative struggle" between artistic will and material conditions that allows itself to be understood historically as a special kind of vision, dominant in a particular epoch.²⁸ Hilberseimer summarized Riegl's analysis with an often repeated aphorism: "An artwork is a condition of tension brought to harmony."²⁹

The form and the material conditions of the artwork will not be in any easy balance; the will to form needs resistance to maintain itself. "[I]f the material opposes no resistance to the will to form, decay enters, evolved through imitation and the ability to play with form, because without resistance no tension can be maintained."³⁰ But still less will the material conditions have determined the form. Hilberseimer is explicit about this latter point: The problem of the "material functionality" of architecture is finally, as in "primitive" architecture, "a problem of limited relevance."³¹ If "the architectural creation manifests the *Kunstwollen* of an epoch in its purest form," giving a "faithful picture" of the "substrate of the respective collective wills of a time,"³² then neither material nor technique is by itself capable of modifying this representation in its

²⁷Ibid., 13

²⁸Riegl emphasized artworks as "evidence not only of man's creative struggle with nature, but also of his peculiar perception of shape and color." Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and its Origins," trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions* 25 (fall 1982 [orig. German 1928]): 20-51; passage cited is from 47.

²⁹Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 11

³⁰Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 28, no. 26 (1922): 996

³¹Hilberseimer, "Mexikanische Baukunst" in *Das Kunstblatt* 6, no. 4 (1922): 163-71; passage cited is from 163.

³²Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 14

essence.³³ On the contrary, the autonomy of the *Kunstwollen* assures that its representational demands will be fulfilled even in contradiction of material conditions. And more, the demands of the will of the present epoch, as with any period of transition, are antithetical to the desire for traditional beauty.

The conventional refuses everything new on the grounds of dissonance. Dissonance may exist in music, architecture, sculpture, and painting, but it is because the true artwork presupposes it rather than installs it. It is always the new stressful conditions that diverge from the habitual; therefore, it is the new proportions and constructions that become dissonant perceptions.... Where beauty establishes itself, tradition is at hand. One wants to enjoy beauty peacefully. The *Kunstwollen*, however, disturbs this rest. It is radical in its manifestation [*Außerung*]. It is the constant threat to tradition.³⁴

The *Kunstwollen*, for Hilberseimer at least, is at once a reaction against positivist science, a disturbance of traditional beauty, and a profound totalization and determinism. And as such, it is a refusal of idealism's celebration of free consciousness, of artistic expression as an activity controlled by an individuated, univocal subject in contact with material essences.

Art produces knowledge of the *Kunstwollen*. But ultimate knowledge is necessarily denied to us. "[Wills and] ideas are absolute. Their manifestation in works of art, however, is only relative. Therefore, the concretization of the idea has discordance as its consequence."³⁵ And then, these relationships in our own epoch are

³³Hilberseimer, "Kirchenbauten in Eisenbeton" in *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 67, no. 42 (1927): 533-542; passage cited is from 533.

³⁴Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 11, 14

³⁵Ibid., 12

"necessarily problematic."³⁶ There can be no unmediated knowledge of the real. Reality can only be known through its representations and images (*Abbild*), externalized in the space of signification as delimited by the will of a particular present. In his affirmation of a wholly relational and differential view of artistic will that controls that creative subject, Hilberseimer not only appropriates Riegl's *Kunstwollen*, but also recollects Nietzsche's antihumanism.

But I must return to this later. For now it is enough to point to this second stress, and to a third: that for Hilberseimer, the condition for artistic practice endemic to modernism is nothing less than a crisis of cultural legitimation experienced primarily as a loss or breakdown of figurability. Artistic technique has been threatened from the inside by virtuosity and detached academicism, and from the outside by industrialized technology and the specializations of science, with the results that the adequation between form and content — and both to their essential "oneness" — is no longer possible. "Our age is necessarily problematic. Perfection would appear now as hypocritical, just as comfortable methods neglect to admit of the abyss [*Abgrunde*]."³⁷ The properties that distinguish artistic discourse as a primal compulsion no longer seem to inhere in that discourse itself. And the human subject is constrained by systems it may have produced but in any case cannot seem to control. "The capitalist economic system has also seized art, and made out of it a speciality production. Academic study enables the effectuation of routine. One learns the metiér and makes out of it a distinguished high calling or a profession."³⁸ Meanwhile, "chaos surrounds us,

³⁶Ibid., 41

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid, 34

unformed, but certain to push into form,"³⁹ "chaos, the attendant of civilization that brings all manner of frustration to figural formation [*Bildung*]."⁴⁰

What is important for us in this articulation of the inability of a culture to give form to its world is the recognition that the loss of signification, experienced as crisis, is the loss of the paternal fiction of humanist thought, of classical art's heritage and guarantee. But even from this posthumanist vantageground, Hilberseimer remained diligent, as we shall see, in his search for manifestations of that primitive movement toward the future, and toward ultimate identity of subject and object in a formal utopia whose presence, behind whatever distortion and beneath whatever layers of repression or confusion, may always be detected by the apparatus of artistic intuition.

This is enough of a summary. In the following part of this section, I shall try to situate Hilberseimer's essays in the discourse of the subject and to pitch the logic of his argument toward some of the individual artistic practices with which he, in his writings from 1919 to 1924, concerned himself. With a more specific understanding of his writings we will then be able to return, in the last part of this section, to my argument that the very ambiguities and contradictions embedded in the conditions of subjectivity in modernism reproduce themselves in the forms of Hilberseimer's architecture.

³⁹Ibid, 39

⁴⁰Ibid, 2

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object



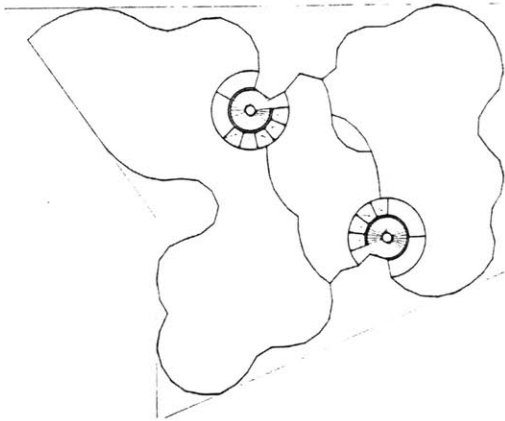
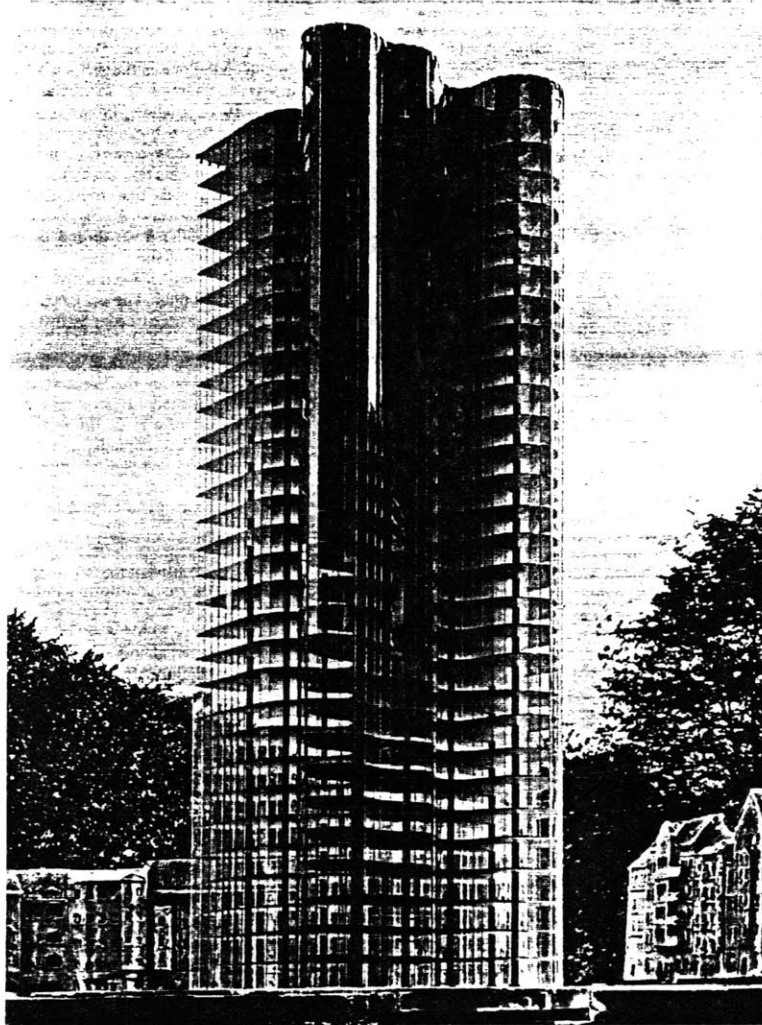
401. Mies van der Rohe, Friedrichstrasse project, 1919, photomontage

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object

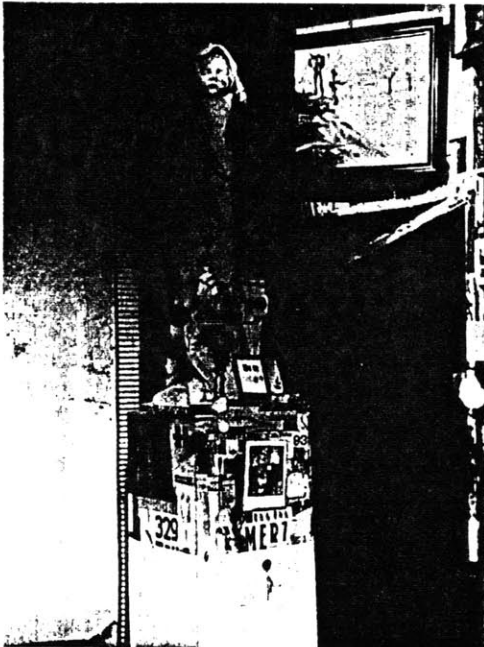
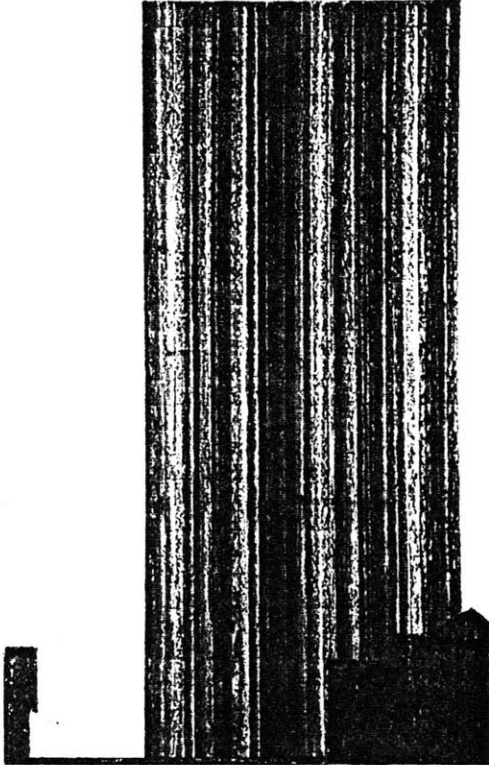


402. Georg Grosz, "Friedrichstrasse,"
lithograph, 1918

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object



403. Mies van der Rohe, skyscraper project,
1922, model
404. Skyscraper project, plan



NEUE ARCHITEKTUR I



LUDWIG HILBERSEIMER GROSSTADTBAUTEN

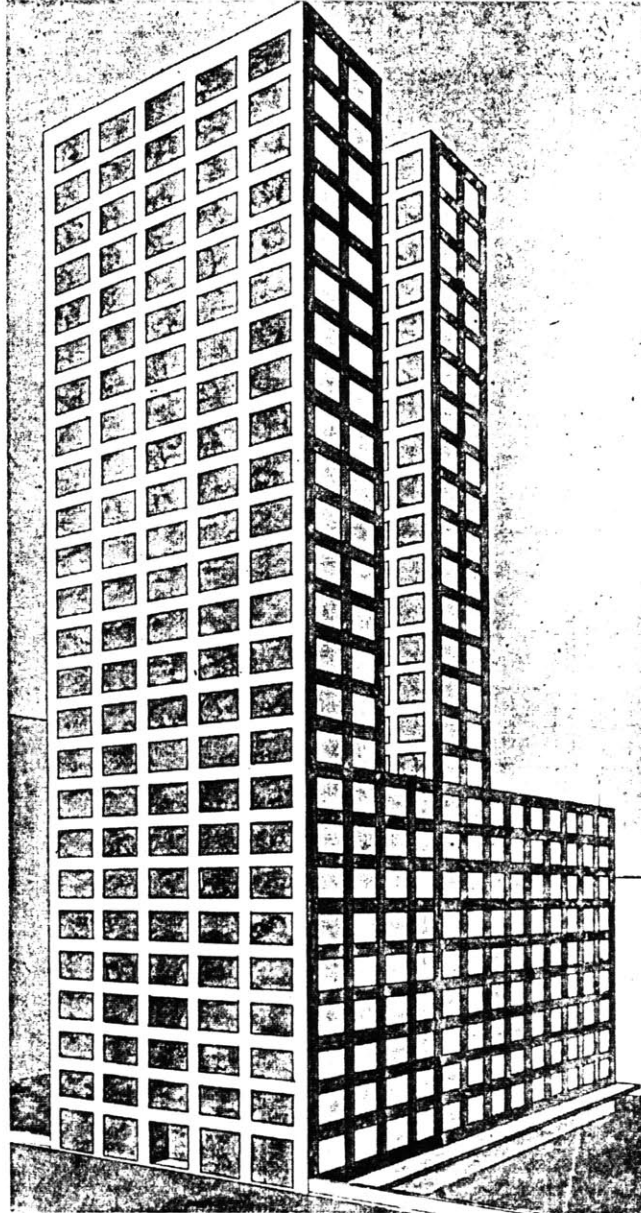
APOSBVERLAG MANNHOVER

405. Mies van der Rohe, skyscraper project, elevation

406. Cover of Grosstadtbauten (Hanover, 1925) showing Ludwig Hilberseimer's Chicago Tribune project of 1922

407. Kurt Schwitters, Merzsäule, c. 1923

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object



408. Hilberseimer, Chicago Tribune project, 1922

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object



Abb. 153. McKim Mead und Whites:
Pennsylvania Hotel, Neuyork

logische Bildung. Root verzichtet auf metrische Durchbildung, Achsenbetonung, Zusammenfassung einzelner Teile zu Formskalen höherer Ordnung. Die Gestaltung der Masse zu einem geformten Organismus ist gelungen. Die Architektur hat aufgehört, eine schlecht sitzende Maske zu sein. Root gab mit diesem Werk der amerikanischen Architektur Grundlage und Ziel, vollzog die Lösung vom Europäismus, formulierte das amerikanische Stilprinzip, das Frank Lloyd Wright universal zusammenfaßte. Das auf diese Weise entstandene Neue hat nichts mit banaler Zweckmäßigkeit zu tun, es ist höchste Gebundenheit und Konzentriertheit zugleich. Root hat gezeigt, daß für die Gegebenheiten seines Landes und die Bedürfnisse der Gegenwart neuartige Ausdrucksformen zu finden sind.

Die neuartige Form

Es fehlt nicht an Versuchen, die durch die planlose Errichtung von Hochhäusern geschaffenen unhaltbaren Zustände der amerikanischen Hochhausstadt zu ändern. Durch ein neues Baugesetz, das „Zoning law“, dessen Grundgedanken Sullivan mit seinen Hochhausbauten in Chicago bereits vorweggenom-

Die Zonierung
Abb. 150 u. 156

Die Gestaltung dekorativen Verhüllung mehr bedarf. Grundlegend für die Gestaltung des Hochhauses sind allein die neuen Bedürfnisse und Ansprüche in technischer und räumlicher Beziehung, sowie die neuen Materialien: Eisen, Eisenbeton und Glas, die sich für das Hochhaus als besonders zweckdienlich erwiesen haben.

Der erste Versuch Als einziger von allen amerikanischen Architekten hat dies neben Sullivan John Root nicht nur erkannt und begriffen, sondern auch durch seinen 1891 erbauten Monadnock Block in Chicago in die Tat umgesetzt. Es ist erstaunlich, daß dieses Hochhaus, das eines der ersten Hochhäuser überhaupt ist, noch von keinem zweiten in seiner „Richtigkeit“ übertroffen wurde. Zwar gehört es einer Zeit an, in der das Tragsystem noch nicht erfunden war. Aber was dieses Gebäude auszeichnet, ist die Tatsache, daß hier das Problem aller Architektur als ein kubisch-rhythmisches endlich wiedererkannt und neuartig unter Berücksichtigung aller Gegebenheiten verwirklicht wurde. Der für die Mehrzahl der späteren Hochhäuser so verderbliche Verlegenheitsausweg, schöpferisches Unvermögen durch übermäßige Stoffanhäufung ersetzen zu wollen, ist hier instinktiv vermieden. Ein untrüglicher Sinn für Proportionen gibt diesem Bauwerk innere Konsistenz und

Großstadt 5

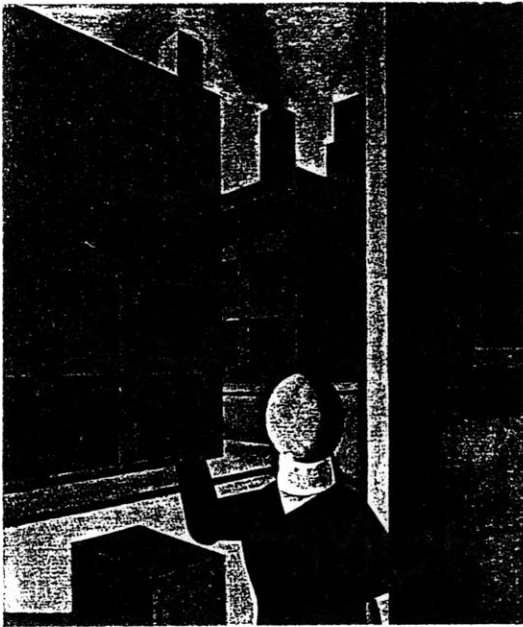


Abb. 154. John Root: Monadnock Block, Chicago

65

409. Page from Groszstadtarchitektur showing McKim, Mead, and White's Pennsylvania Hotel, New York, and Burnham and Root's Monadnock Building, Chicago

The Crisis of Humanism of the Dissolution of the Object



410. Georg Grosz, Untitled, 1920
411. Heinrich Maria Dauringhausen, The Speculator, 1920-21

Hope beyond Chaos: on Expressionism and Dadaism

The chief conceptual framework within which all of Hilberseimer's examination of art takes place is the familiar Hegelian opposition of the concrete and the abstract, and the nature of artistic mediation between the two. The opposition is not a symmetrical one, for the abstract denotes both the brute facticity of the empirical world — presumed to be preexistent and already formed material with directly accessible content — and the universal, transcendental, formal categories that have lost all material contact with that empirical reality. Without mediation, the former falls into the illusions of a simple positivism, mistaking its own conceptual categories for solid parts and pieces of the real world itself, and the latter results inexorably in an empty formalism, what Hilberseimer called the "point zero" of the abstract painting of suprematism and neoplasticism. Hilberseimer summarized this dialectic necessity: "Stripped of rational elements [the realm of the objective], architecture would be nothing but an empty play on forms; without idealistic intentions [the realm of the subjective] it would be merely engineering."⁴¹

The Hegelian opposition overlaps the more contemporary notions of alienation and subjectivity and allows a distinction between modernist and premodernist epochs. In the artworks of preindustrialized, nonalienated, religious societies, the artist's raw

⁴¹Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, c. 1922 (Ludwig Karl Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, series 8/3, box 1/10), passim.

material had an immediate meaning; it presented itself as concrete in its elements from the outset and required no mediation. In the words of Hegel,

What man requires for his external life, house and home, tent, chair, bed, sword and spear, the ship with which he crosses the ocean, the chariot which carries him into battle, boiling and roasting, slaughtering, eating and drinking — nothing of all this must have become merely a dead means to an end for him; he must still feel alive in all these with his whole sense and self in order that what is in itself merely external be given a humanly inspired individual character by such close connection with the human individual.⁴²

In the words of Hilberseimer,

Art is always an expression of a philosophy of life, a symbol of spiritual experience, a concentration of intuitive knowledge, a portrait of the entire human connection with the cosmos. These conditions are plainly located in the so-called primitive people. In them endures the unity of the attitude of will and deed....

The essential aspect of art does not point to the development of so-called high culture but to the primitive creations for which there was nothing other than idea and material; the primitive creations still had no models and no restraints....

[Such creations] grow out of their respective materials, using their possibilities completely.⁴³

⁴²Hegel, *Aesthetik*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1955), 414; quoted in Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, trans. Edith Bone (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 155.

⁴³Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 28, no. 26 (1922): 993, 995-996

In primitive societies, there was nothing other than idea and material: subject and object were one. With modernity, however, everything is changed. The elements of the work are thrown from their human center and a dissolution of the human subject sets in, a dispersion that leads out at every point into the contingent, into brute fact and matter, into abstraction, into the not-human.⁴⁴ The consequent loss of connection and comprehensibility is the very mark of the modern experience, one in which the essential meaning of life may no longer be immanent to it, but transcendent or otherworldly or, indeed, wholly missing; one in which the individual and the outside world can never find absolute identity or unity, in which the primacy of the individual subject and its conceptual correlate, a unified and substantial center of experience, are both called into question.

What seems essential to the so-called high cultures is, above all, their civilizing consequence.... Form becomes the substitute for intuitive experiences, it makes possible the appearance of an engagement with an object over which one has control. One tries to replace quality with quantity, the productive with the reproductive.... Skepticism still remains as the last outlet.⁴⁵

According to Hilberseimer, at the present, when individual intuition has been riven from the collective reality now externalized and rationalized, artistic practice is left to straddle the cleft. The modern artist must mediate between the objective world and its subjectively comprehensible forms. If art holds to a purely individual, ungeneralizable subjectivity, it risks falling into a falsely recreated primitivism.

⁴⁴Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 166

⁴⁵Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 993

The worst thing that we possess nowadays is recreated primitiveness.... In painting this is the tendency represented by the groups around Pechstein, Heckel and Schmitt-Rottluff, intoxicated by effects, attracted by the Ash Wednesday of Lent. Study voyages to the South Seas are no substitute for creative energies.... Wanting to be primitive in one's creating without really being so: this is the most monstrous of mistakes. One can, of course, be primitive in one's own means, but not in one's own objectives. The result is the most vulgar of artistic workmanship.⁴⁶

If, on the other hand, art disengages itself completely from subjectivity and primitive intuition, it tends to become absorbed by evermore complicated, self-regulating mechanisms of the discipline, and by categories of abstract knowledge rather than concrete experience. When an artistic practice maximizes stylistic development rather than creation, when "know-how" (*Können*) and refinement, habit and reproduction, triumph over primitive imagination and material, and the bonds with the subjective realm are thus broken, then the necessary tension between form and matter is eased, and the primitive "desire for form" is collapsed.

One suddenly understood the fundamental importance of primitiveness as against that reproductiveness that turned into habituation and dominion over materials, killed will-power, and saw good in the mere development of knowledge and the work of art.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Hilberseimer, "Der Naturalismus und das Primitive in der Kunst," in *Der Einzige* 1, no. 10 (1919): 88-89; passage cited is from 89. Hilberseimer draws somewhat on Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik* (Leipzig, 1915).

⁴⁷Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," in *Der Einzige* 1, no. 1 (1919): 5-6

Neoplasticism and suprematism, according to Hilberseimer, have thus guided abstract art to the point of total annihilation of its material and to extreme formal concentration, just as Renaissance painting had done in its epoch. Pictorial stereometries risk becoming depleted planimetric elements, rhythmical games on the surface of the canvas. This is the "zero point of art."⁴⁸ Thus we see that, for Hilberseimer, the brute facticity of simple empiricism and the formal universals of non-objective painting are obverse conditions of equal abstractness, out of touch with concrete reality, whereas the monadic subjectivity of expressionism is that abstraction's inverse, a false primitivism. What is necessary, then, is a constantly articulated "state of tension" between the subjective will to art and objective reality.

When considering in one of his last works (1972) the possibility of transforming life into an organic work of art, Herbert Marcuse concluded that "no matter in what form, art can never eliminate the tension between art and reality. Elimination of this tension would be the impossible final unity of subject and object: the materialist version of absolute idealism."⁴⁹ Tension may be construed as nonantagonistic and nondestructive, but it can never be eliminated. Half a century earlier, Hilberseimer could have agreed with Marcuse: according to Hilberseimer, while art attempts to "humanize those *unheimlich* metaphysical experiences" in the "vision engendered in the moment of ecstasy," "the true work of art is the result of a

⁴⁸Hilberseimer, "Konstruktivismus," in *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 28, nos. 19-20 (1922): 831. Hilberseimer, however, praises the work of the constructivists as properly elementary form.

⁴⁹Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 108. Also see Martin Jay's chapter on "Anamnestic Totalization: Memory in the Thought of Herbert Marcuse," in *Marxism and Totality* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 220 ff.

state of tension" between that subjective vision, that primitive will, and objective reality.⁵⁰

We are led, then, to consider such a dialectical vision of artistic mediation in the primary moments of art reviewed by Hilberseimer: expressionism and dadaism. I shall attempt to articulate these two moments according to the various possible relationships between subject and object entailed by each, and then to construct out of Hilberseimer's often aphoristic and elliptical assertions the implied synthesis of an even more "primitive" moment of completion against which all historical stages of art are evaluated. We will come to see that this synthesis is necessarily contradictory in terms of the subject it inscribes: a subject at once dispersed into present actuality — a product of a present condition that Hilberseimer designates as chaos — and yet capable, through the exercise of artistic will, of discovering within that very chaos of the present ciphers of a future.

Expressionism and the uncoerced subject

The notion of the primitive is crucial in Hilberseimer's art theory. A preliminary indication of his conceptualization of the primitive is afforded by a consideration of his dissent from the "false primitivism" and romantic-expressionist pronouncements of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst. Although an early supporter of the group, which was led by Bruno Taut and later Walter Gropius, Hilberseimer withdrew his participation by the summer of 1919, after submissions by him and Mies to the

⁵⁰Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, passim.

Ausstellung unbekannter Architekten had been rejected. Hilberseimer was to recall these events later:

In the spring of 1919 the "Arbeitsrat für Kunst" organized at Berlin an exhibition entitled "Unknown architects." It is perhaps interesting to note that neither Mies van der Rohe nor I myself were able to take part in this exhibition. The jury refused to accept our designs, probably because their clarity and soberness from an architectural point of view was at odds with the romantic spirit that reigned over the exhibition. During the same period the "Arbeitsrat für Kunst" published a manifesto that carried some of Walter Gropius's and Bruno Taut's declarations on architecture that were characteristic of the dominant tendency in that period and that clearly illustrate the Expressionism in architecture.... While Bruno Taut, under Paul Scheerbarth's influence, busies himself with the transformation of the surface of our planet, the other expressionist architects, Hans Scharoun, Max Taut, Hans and Wassily Luckhardt, and Hermann Finsterlin, content themselves with applying their ideas and principles to single buildings or groups of buildings. Their studies consisted of sketches, drawings, and models which generally concerned religious buildings, theaters, and auditoria. Some of these projects were nothing other than formal exercising of their imaginations. As we have already said, they believed that this type of architecture, considered primitive and primeval, had the faculty of either re-awakening religious feelings or of deepening and consolidating them. These ideas were received with ever increasing scepticism.⁵¹

⁵¹Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Berliner Architektur der 20er Jahre* (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg Verlag, 1967), 30. The project Mies submitted was that for the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Hague. The projects by Hilberseimer are probably those later published in Max Wagenführ, "Architektonische Entwürfe von L. Hilberseimer," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 22 (July 1919). Wagenführ confirmed that Hilberseimer's projects should be understood as antidotes to expressionism.

Hilberseimer articulated his skepticism of expressionism in a number of his art critical essays of 1919.⁵² According to him, expressionist art is the necessarily false attempt in modernity to recapture some of the quality of a lost primitive past, the attempted reconciliation between matter and spirit, between daily life and life's essence. Expressionism's promise of a future of reconciliation and happiness — a utopian alternative to the present perception of a degraded social existence — is bound up with its romantic retention of previous instances of joy and fulfillment recoverable through some notion of *anamnesis*, "a conscious inclination toward the past," as Hilberseimer put it. And yet, the formal activities of the expressionists project their desire for a reconciled community of man into a psychic space not so different from the present save for the eruption of particular desired objects or effects presently lacking — the quasi-spiritual effects of gothic colored glass, curved lines, crafted details, and continuous metamorphoses of light and colors. Such effects are "primitive and infantile" in the sense that they amount to fetishes or magical incantations, a conjuring up of the object in question just exactly as it is longed for, in all its plenitude, while at the same time holding the actual material of the world in suspension, with no real attempt to change it.

The fantasies of the freed individual psyche maintain faith in a moralized and mythicized future where that most ungentle attribute of the present — alienation — has disappeared. Thus, the very concept of expressionism presupposes a painful split within the monadic subject. As Fredric Jameson has written,

⁵²On the expressionists and, in particular, Heckel, Pechstein, and Schmitt-Rottluff of Die Brücke, see Hilberseimer, "Der Naturalismus und das primitive in der Kunst," in *Der Einzige* 1, no. 10 (1919): 88-89; but key concepts and phrases recur throughout the 1919 articles.

[E]xpressionism requires the category of the individual monad, but it also shows us the heavy price to be paid for that precondition, dramatizing the unhappy paradox that when you constitute your individual subjectivity as a self-sufficient field and a closed realm in its own right, you thereby also shut yourself off from everything else and condemn yourself to the windless solitude of the monad, buried alive and condemned in a prison-cell without egress.⁵³

Furthermore, in expressionism that paradox now finds its analogue in the object itself — in expressionist strategies such as the symbolism of the crystal, the empathetic content of contorted surfaces, the projection of the *Stadtkrone*, or the withdrawal into the cave.⁵⁴ The anguish of the metropolitan experience is externalized in the work of art as an outward projection and formalization of an inward desperation for freedom. A typical statement of the period makes the point:

Freedom of the subject, as a corrective and confrontation to the conservative social art practiced with the unstable ethic of commercial interests. Freedom and authentic life for the individual.... It wants to transcend the commonplace, which means freedom from it. It tends to recognize the forms of expression of counter-art, that is to say, of the art of those regarded as infantile or sick, according to its own laws, not as a rational product of consciousness, but rather as an expression subjected to its own particular laws.⁵⁵

⁵³Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July-August 1984): 53-92; passage cited is from 63-64.

⁵⁴Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1973) analyzes the categories of tower and cave as tropes of expressionism.

⁵⁵From the catalogue of the group Rih, Karlsruhe, in Helga Klieman, *Die Novembergruppe* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1969), 59; cited in Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987 [orig. Italian, 1980]), 122

According to Hilberseimer, the nostalgia for past totalities, the welling up and formal dramatization of subjective protest against the objective universe that threatens to crush the individual, along with the provincialism of the present, what he called "the unshakable belief in one's own face," these expressionist tendencies effectively block the possibility of any genuine opening onto the future, of imagining a future that might be constitutionally *other* than the present. Expressionism's eschatological vision of the uncoerced self is generated by a thoroughly despairing understanding of the possibilities of historical life. Its hope is placed rather in the myth of absolute presence — the notion that being is a kind of plenum in which there exists a plenitude similar to past social totalities, and that for this reason something like a substantial and meaningful present is ontologically possible. The expressionist anxiety before the future ends up, paradoxically, by glorifying the past and hypostasizing the present.

So it is that Hilberseimer here identifies expressionism's Platonic side, for the most tenacious version of the myth of an absolute presence is the Platonic doctrine of memory as a return to lost sources of plenitude before birth. "Thus primitivism, exoticism, and infantilism arose within Expressionism.... All these intentions that link themselves to the past are but attempts to substitute an intellectual rapport with the past for the *lost tradition*." But more important, it is here that Hilberseimer rejects the possibility of a return to plenitude and counters the Platonic doctrine of *memory as a return to significant objects* with the Nietzschean imperative of *chaos as the production of significant appearances*. It is this latter that is, by Hilberseimer's lights, truly primitive. He continues,

But [this return to the primitive] is far from a return to nature. Expressed in all these aspirations is the search for the law that the art of the past manifests in almost all of its works. But every link to the past is destined to lead to eclecticism. The true [or truly primitive] work of art will always be born *only from the chaos of time*. Only in this way can its image take on sense.⁵⁶

Nietzschean chaos

Hilberseimer's notion of chaos as a constitutive condition for meaning cannot be overemphasized, for it occurs again and again in his criticisms and is the hinge on which his concepts of artistic mediation and subjectivity turn. It is worth a brief detour from our main concern with Hilberseimer's texts to review this theme. Chaos is one of the principle themes in Nietzschean thought. At once a relational condition organizing phenomena, manifestations, and dissimulations, and the intolerable, depthless, groundless reality of being, chaos is neither disorder waiting to be ordered nor nonsense waiting to be imprinted with significance. Rather chaos is already interpreted being: not so much a perversion of an original harmony as the constitutive condition for any existence and the primitive determination of will to power. And it is nature that determines being itself as the significant manifestation of chaos.⁵⁷

In Nietzschean thought chaos is related to epistemological as well as ontological concerns, and it is through the realm of the former that we are afforded a route into

⁵⁶Hilberseimer, "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst," Sammlung Gabrielson Göteborg 1922-23 (Art Institute of Chicago, Series 1/1 Box 1/4); reprinted in the pamphlet Zehn Jahre Novembergruppe, 52-57; English trans. in Manfredo Tafuri, "USSR-Berlin 1922: From Populism to the 'Constructivist International,'" in Joan Ockman, et al., eds., Architecture Criticism Ideology (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 179-83; my emphasis.

⁵⁷Jean Granier, "Nietzsche's Conception of Chaos," in David B. Allison, ed., The New Nietzsche (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 135-41

Hilberseimer's art criticism. For Nietzsche, philosophical interrogation arrives not at truths corresponding to things-in-themselves — solid essences of reality that issue signs of themselves, that produce their own noumena — but at senses constructed by interpreting subjects from a flux of "appearances." Knowledge is essentially active; it is belief and conquest, and as such its particular structure, including the principles and categories of logic, is not an adequation to objects, but rather to the will to power.

Appearance, as I understand it, is the true and unique reality of things; it is what all existing predicates belong to, and what to some extent could best be designated by the sum of these predicates, and this would even include contrary predicates. But this work plainly signifies a reality that is *inaccessible* to the operations and distinctions of logic, an "appearance," therefore, in relation to "logical truth," which — it must be added — is only possible in an *imaginary* world. I am not claiming that appearance is opposed to "reality;" on the contrary, I maintain that appearance is reality, that it is opposed to whatever transforms the actual into an imaginary "real world." If one were to give a precise name to this reality, it could be called "will to power." Such a designation, then, would be in accordance with its internal reality and not with its proteiform, ungraspable, and fluid nature.⁵⁸

To construct any system of value or any sort of logic from will to power is to relate it to the desires and needs of a subject — desires for good and bad, for stability, order, causality, finality, unity, identity. As Michel Haar has written,

⁵⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Nietzsches Werke. Grossoktavausgabe*, vol. 7 (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1901-1913), §121; cited in Granier, 136

Logic rests upon a useful and necessary falsification, being born of the vital need to lean upon identities despite that fact that nothing real is reducible either to unity or to identity. Therefore, "truth is that kind of error without which a certain kind of living being cannot live." [Nietzsche] But truth is, in addition, falsification of the False, for the "in itself," namely "pure becoming," presents itself to us as Chaos — i.e., as non-(logical)-truth, eternal and infinite.⁵⁹

All existence is interpretation; the subject constitutes sense by an interpretive engagement.

Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself; because he has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited. His interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if he does not create a formula: as an interpreter he is still creative.⁶⁰

It should not be thought, however, that this entails a conception either of unified subject or of a limiting case of interpretation. "We are a plurality that has imagined itself a unity."⁶¹ "The world for us has become infinite, meaning that we cannot refuse it the possibility to lend itself to an infinity of interpretations."⁶²

So, truth designates chaos. But chaos is too hostile to life, too terrible to be apprehended. Chaos can only appear as masked in interpretation, veiled in appearances. "It would be possible that the true constitution of things was so hostile to

⁵⁹Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language," in David B. Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 5-36; passage cited is on page 17.

⁶⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, (1886-88), Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. and eds. (New York: Random House, 1968), §767

⁶¹Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §333

⁶²Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), Walter Kaufmann, trans. (New York: Random House, 1974)

the presuppositions of life, so opposed to them, that we needed appearance in order to be able to live."⁶³ So every interpretation is always already a dissimulation, a concealment, a deferral, a mask. "We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this."⁶⁴ Every interpretation is an ontological dispersal — a necessary refusal of unity, essence, and identity — and an epistemological "scrawl" (the word is Nietzsche's) — the production of sense that is partial, contingent, superimposed, and shifting. "Insofar as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. — 'Perspectivism.'"⁶⁵

Chaos, then, designates, on the one hand, the horizon of forces against which various interpretive perspectives are drawn and, on the other, the instance when, all values and logics having imploded, the will to power returns to itself. The incessant passage of the eternal return — the reiterative power of appearance to affirm itself — is inscribed in chaos and directed against the essential unity in things, against identity. Neither is the will to power a substrate behind the constant issue of appearances; appearances do not conceal *something*; there is no solid essence of will that accounts for them. The will to power is just, in Nietzsche's words, "the last instance which we could go back to," an instance rather than an essence. And the eternal return is not the recurrence of the same essence in different guises, but the instantiation of ever divergent appearances without an ultimate goal. "Universal chaos of the sort excluding

⁶³Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §583

⁶⁴Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface, 4

⁶⁵Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §481

all activity having a final purpose does not contradict the idea of circular movement: it's just that this movement is an arational necessity...."⁶⁶ The inclusion of chaos in the necessity of the circle of the return constitutes the perfection of circle as always already a defect. The totality of the return is a fractured totality.

Dadaism and the dispersed subject

The emphasis on chaos distinguishes Hilberseimer's theory from the altogether different, anti-urban Nietzscheanism of *Jugendstil* and expressionism. Hilberseimer's early contact with the disquietude of the radical art circles in Berlin, such as the G group,⁶⁷ the Novembergruppe, the Ring, and for a brief period Die Kommune,⁶⁸ gives further specificity to his understanding of possible new sensibilities springing not from a false sense of the fullness of the past, but from the chaos of the present. Hilberseimer was associated with the Berlin dadaists, such as Hans Richter, Hannah Höch, and Raoul Hausmann, as well as with Otto Dix, Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, and Viking Eggeling, throughout the 'teens and '20s. Richter published the magazine G: Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung (figs. 412 and 413), to which Hilberseimer contributed articles. "This circle," Richter wrote, "included Arp, Tzara, Hilberseimer, Doesburg, but soon also Mies van der Rohe, Lissitzky, [Naum] Gabo,

⁶⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-84), in *The Portable Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufman trans. and ed. (New York: Viking Press, 1968), "The Seven Seals"

⁶⁷Hans Richter defined G as being "born from the need to say what we could not tolerate and, at the same time, from the need to create a forum for the ideas that, after the Dada period and with Constructivism, were characterized as representing the cultural tendencies of the new era." Hans Richter, *Köpfe und Hinterköpfe* (Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 1967), 75

⁶⁸Die Kommune was a dissident faction of the avant-garde whose members overlapped with other groups. See Klieman, *Die Novembergruppe*.

[Anton] Pevszner [*sic*], Kiesler, Man Ray, Soupault, [Walter] Benjamin, Hausmann, etc."⁶⁹ The first issue of G, in July 1923, announced its refusal of romantic subjectivity in rather harsh terms.

The basic demand of creative figuration [*Gestaltung*] is economy. Pure relationship of power and material. This depends on elementary means and a total command of means. Elementary order. Regularity. We have no need for the sort of beauty that attaches itself like tinsel to our very being; rather we need [to realize] the internal order of our being.⁷⁰

Richter described Hilberseimer as "one of my oldest friends, since 1912.... As a friend he was in some ways an anti-friend, a man never satisfied and a bastian contrary by profession; a just man who was quite convinced he was in the right."⁷¹ Hilberseimer's work was of interest also to Schwitters. In 1925 he published Hilberseimer's Grosstadtbauten as numbers 18-19 of Merz.⁷² In Kunst und Zeiten, 1926, he lists Hilberseimer among those artists with whom he sympathized and notes that Hilberseimer's "steps take him from the dry premises of rational thought to proper figuration."⁷³ And in an article on the Weissenhof Siedlung in Stuttgart, Schwitters criticizes the trendiness of Peter Behrens and Hans Poelzig, who produced "pretty Italian villas" in the "new style," and identifies a "danger" in Le Corbusier because he is

⁶⁹Hans Richter, letter to Raoul Hausmann, 16 February 1964, quoted in Hausmann's letter to the editor, "More on Group G," Art Journal 24 (Summer 1965): 350-52

⁷⁰Hans Richter and Werner Graeff, G 1 (July 1923): 1

⁷¹Hans Richter, Köpfe und Hinterköpfe (Zürich: Velag der Arche, 1967), 75

⁷²The essay also appears as Hilberseimer, Grosstadtbauten (Hannover: Aposverlag, 1925).

⁷³Kurt Schwitters, Kunst und Zeiten (1926), now in Schwitters, Das literarische Werk vol. 5, ed. Friedhelm Lach (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1981), 236-40. Other artists listed were Braque, Boccioni, Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Malevich, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, and Mies van der Rohe.

a genius dedicated to romantic excess. In contrast, Schwitters praises the Weissenhof projects of Hilberseimer as "basic, normal, and devoid of daydreams."⁷⁴ As a final instance of the artworld's interest in Hilberseimer's work, we should note that in 1924 some of his drawings were exhibited in the Novembergruppe section of the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung and in the gallery Der Sturm. Hilberseimer's explicit identification of his work with the elementarists against the expressionists⁷⁵ is an identification with this circle of post-dadaist artists.

Hilberseimer's estimations of dadaist and post-dadaist art movements were recorded in his art critical writings. In his essay "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst" of 1923, he summarizes the dadaist experience simply: "Dadaism brought with it a general activity that had a vivifying effect on art. Its effect in Germany has been essentially political."⁷⁶ But in "Dadaismus" of 1920, his characterization is put more precisely in terms of subjectivity and dadaism's adversarial relationship with bourgeois culture: "[In dadaism] the ancient feelings of security are dissolved and replaced by an animated world, by restlessness, by excitement. The I, now set free from meaningless bonds, 'flows freely into the cosmos.' Dada destroys the idols of culture and scorns the serious tedium of art."⁷⁷

⁷⁴Kurt Schwitters, "Stuttgart die Wohnung Werkbundaussstellung," Der Sturm 18, no. 10 (1928): 148-50; now in Schwitters, Das Literarische Werk vol. 5, 280-86

⁷⁵See previous chapter. Various notions of elementarism were in the air among the members of the Berlin-Moscow axis. Hilberseimer would later suggest that the "new spirit" in much of the art shown in the gallery Der Sturm may have come from Nietzsche, who had written of the "*Elementarphilosophie*" of the pre-Socratics in contrast to Plato. See Hilberseimer's address to the Technische Universität, Berlin, 1963 (Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago Series 1, Folder 5/7). I owe this reference to Richard Pommer.

⁷⁶Hilberseimer, "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst," 180.

⁷⁷Hilberseimer, "Dadaismus," Sozialistische Monatshefte 26, nos. 25-26 (1920): 1120-1122. The internal quotation is Hilberseimer's.

For Hilberseimer, dada fulfilled the contestatory obligation of art to resist the security of habit and explode the nostalgias for a reconciliation between subject and object no longer possible. Furthermore, there is no reason not to allow that Hilberseimer fully understood the dadaist politically motivated destruction of aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic pleasure in the service of a specific cultural critique of Weimar circa 1920. It is precisely the critical negational aesthetic practices and forms of expression adopted by the dadaists, their rejection of art's traditional role as the "production of specialities," which indicts any attempt to fall back into a falsely primitivist reproduction of a reconciled world. So it is that the "truly primitive" impulse of Hausmann, Dix, or Grosz can measure up to the realism of "a pictorial practice that will not be a mimetic reproduction of nature but, rather, criticism, parody, drama, and a new order springing from chaos."⁷⁸

Berlin dada was, as Hilberseimer recognized, first and foremost a political weapon, "bloody earnest" and aimed at well-defined targets, an instrument of derision and ridicule dedicated to the destruction of bourgeois chauvinism and the autonomous artistic practices that it fueled. The "wide range" of hybrid artforms produced by the Berliners between 1919 and 1923 reveal more than an elaboration of cubist compositional techniques; the dadaists were aware of their assemblages, cabaret productions, and photomontages as forms for a new politicization of intellectual work, one that would give audiences to understand what kinds of future social regeneration might be available by reordering their perception of the historical present.

⁷⁸Ibid.

What distinguishes dada from most other modern movements in art, and what is important for our consideration of Hilberseimer's conception of dadaist practice, is not the reductive thesis that "it's all political" (or as Max Ernst dismissed dada, "*C'est vraiment allemand. Les intellectuels allemands ne peuvent pas faire ni caca ni pipi sans ideologies.*"); instead, it is the acute awareness that affiliations between art and cultural authority obtain *both* in the case of art's direct dependence on the institutional ideological apparatus and in the unlikely condition of art's total autonomy. Dada understood art as belonging not to some free-floating *Geist* or to some self-governed, coherently determined domain, but to a worldly intellectual endeavor — enmeshed in circumstance, historical contingency, and currents of thought; connected in complex ways to power, social class and economic production, to the dissemination of values and world pictures. What must be made clear is the proposition that culture itself — or thought or art — was for dada as for Hilberseimer a quasiautonomous extension of politico-economic reality. To adopt the language of Edward Said, "One could go so far to say that culture ... is what gives the State something to govern."⁷⁹ Through a ferocious decomposition of the images of the dominant values, dada attempted to oppose the self-affirming machinery of culture as well as to reject "art's traditional role as the 'production of specialities'" that encode the culture's values.

The terms with which dada defined the political instrumentality of art are important in coming to a characterization of "a pictorial practice that will not be an imitative reproduction of nature but, rather, criticism, vital parody, drama, a new order

⁷⁹Edward Said, commenting on the writings of Antonio Gramsci, in his *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 171

springing from chaos." After 1920 the Berlin avant-garde was becoming progressively disillusioned with the political revolution. *Junker* militarism and nationalism had proved far stronger than radical intellectuals with international associations had originally expected. The entire cultural establishment in which dada was enmeshed quickly became suspect in a way Lunacharsky's Narkompros organization, on which the proto-dadaist members of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst seems to have modeled some of their more positive notions of engagement, was not. Society and culture were viewed as fundamentally nonorganic entities, products of a system, a ruling order that was progressively replacing technologies and spaces controlled by and for man with ones spontaneously elaborated — of both wonder and fear, of civilization and death, with potentials for destruction as well as new forms of life — that began to overwhelm man. Georg Grosz saw it as

complete insanity to believe that Spirit or people of spirit ruled the world.... Our only mistake was to have been seriously engaged at all with art. Dada was the breakthrough, taking place with bawling and scornful laughter; it came out of a narrow, overbearing and overrated milieu.... We saw then the insane end products of the ruling order of society and burst into laughter. We had not yet seen the system behind this insanity.... Then, there would be no more laughing.⁸⁰

The portraits of Grosz and Dix present, among other things, a preoccupation with the horror and disgust of the destruction of the war (a war viewed as propagated by

⁸⁰George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde, "Die Kunst ist in Gefahr" (Berlin, 1925); English translation in Lucy Lippard ed., *Dadas on Art* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 81.

an overwhelming technology and the lies of bourgeois rationalism) and "oppose with irony and cynicism the constraints on difference [*Variétéhafte*] of our profiteering world,"⁸¹ as Hillberseimer wrote. The artist, according to Grosz's self portrait (fig. 413), is a "pedantic automaton," at once a product of a mechanized, commodified culture and its most violent enemy. Similarly, Hausmann's "Tête mécanique, L'Esprit de notre temps" (fig. 414), or his portrait of the artist, "Tatlin" (fig. 415), with their isomorphism between man and machine, are more ambivalent, accidental, "oneiric," accumulations of ready-made images than they are organized affirmations of machine art. By Hausmann's own account, he was interested in demonstrating that "everyday man has nothing but the capacities which chance has glued to his skull, on the exterior [*extérieurement*], the brain was vacant;"⁸² that is, in showing that the possibility for private redemption had been foreclosed by the penetration of the mechanization and massification of the market into the most remote regions of the self, in showing the reduction of the individual, at once exalted and ridiculed, to a nullity.

Dada demonstrates that artistic production in society has an inescapable dialectic relationship with those mass-cultural formations that govern collective perception. It will not be possible, henceforth after dada, to presume that aesthetic perfection and disinterested contemplation possess a transhistorical value which places them outside or beyond the material determinations of history. But more, dadaist practice appropriates the very terms provided by capitalist society to perceptually interpellate the viewer—

⁸¹Hilberseimer, "Dix," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, January, 1923 (Art Institute of Chicago, Series 8/3, Box 5/35), 66

⁸²Raoul Hausmann, "L'Esprit de notre temps 1919," in Michel Giroud, ed., *Raoul Hausmann: "Je ne suis pas un photographe"* (Paris: Chêne, 1975), 30

advertisements, journalism, commercial products — and uses them in an insurrectionary form of affiliation with that society, adhering to the bourgeois artistic conventions of presenting a unique, fabricated, rectangularly framed objects even as it subversively folds into the singularity of those objects the dispersed images of bourgeois culture. In this way, dada can be said to *repeat* reality but not to *duplicate* it; or in Nietzschean terminology to construct appearances of the real against the horizon of chaos, and in so doing, to enunciate the desire to abolish idealist and humanist ideologies by dismantling the increasingly entrenched notion of the viewing subject as an ideal, unified, centered self, undivided by conflicting psychical enticements or material appetites, unencumbered in its contemplation of the abstract unity of the autonomous art object that was to be both an inducement to and a metaphor for a position of transcendence and mastery. For dada the human subject, to put it now in Althusserian language, is structured like a mode of production, and as such cannot be the centered subject of bourgeois epistemology and aesthetics, but is instead precisely decentered to the degree that it is the bearer of different and often contradictory structures.

Hilberseimer undertood this, but it must be underscored here that the critical dissonance, shock, and "*Wahrheitsfanatismus*"⁸³ of dadaist activities, as well as the concomitant assault on the human center as the origin of sense, are interpreted by Hilberseimer as directed toward a possible future. In speaking of dadaism, Hilberseimer evokes Nietzsche's lesson of a world "where we will be able to be original, something like parodists of the history of the world and God's clowns; to the

⁸³Hilberseimer, "Dadaismus"

point where, perhaps, our laughter possesses a future, out of the so many things belonging to the present time that are condemned to oblivion."⁸⁴ If one cannot refute the experience of chaos, one can nevertheless mediate it, transforming it into that positive anticipation which is its correlative. Indeed, artistic practice for Hilberseimer just *is* such mediation: "the formal-becoming of this expression [of the will of the epoch, which is chaos] just is the work of art."⁸⁵ Hilberseimer quotes Hausmann to verify his own thesis:

Times of decay, of stagnation, are at the same time epochs of new stimulation [*Neubelebung*] to becoming. One breaks open the old to enable the new to be formed. [We are] suspended between two worlds. In these times the productive energy is inclined toward the grotesque and satirical, toward [as Hausmann says,] "the laughing or ironic elevation of men over their no-longer-appropriate responsibilities. So, too, the tendency in art — the objectification [*Gegenständlichkeit*] will lose sense, so to speak, through the presentation of its refusal to correspond with the sense of events. By emphasizing the ridiculous, the senseless, the repulsive..., through the figuration [*Gestaltung*] of the deficiencies of the world, we are allowed to anticipate a higher world. By way of representations, the sculptor must support such consciousness." [...] From this paradox it follows that the senseless, repulsive, and hideous will let the genuine and real step forward.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 13. Agnes Kohlmeyer, "Apollo e Dioniso: Hilberseimer critico d'arte," *Rassegna* 8, 27 (September 1986): 30-31, asserts that Hilberseimer can be seen as part of the "formal Dadaist" tendency. I can agree with her assertion but would note its incomplete formulation.

⁸⁶Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 29. Hilberseimer notes that the internal quotation is from Raoul Hausmann. I have not been able to find its source.

Out of the banality, the senselessness, and triviality of the present emerges the hope for a future. Hilberseimer wishes to locate the positive within the negative itself: to grasp that the negative may serve as a means of access to the positive that reveals itself through it; that the negative is the very authentication of the positive; and that chaos is the constitutive condition of a new order. The lacerating ambiguity of Hilberseimer's position follows from his wish to preserve the chaos-negating power of spiritual intuition at the level of the individual human agent without collapsing into either mysticism or individualism; and this crossed by his equally intense insistence that the content of that intuition is immanent in the very chaos of the world.

Hilberseimer's posthumanist subject

And so we can finally characterize with some precision the concept of the subject that emerges in Hilberseimer's account of expressionism, dadaism, and other artistic practices by which he was surrounded. It is a subject that can be fitted into both a vision of effective human agency and some more radical notion of a subjectivity dispersed into the realms of industrialization, standardization, mass reproduction, and consumption. That is, Hilberseimer understands the subject of modernism as *at once* the particular constitution of knowledge, history, and discourse in a historically specific and individual human agent, *and* the no less circumstantially dense plurality of forces that has passed from both an arrogant bourgeois humanism and the expressionist sentimentalization of individual distress to a new, postindividualist, posthumanist framework. The subject as seen by Hilberseimer is continually interpellated or called upon to take multiple and contradictory subject-positions, yet it is capable of binding

these positions together into "a new order springing from chaos." "The I, now set free from meaningless bonds, 'flows freely into the cosmos.'" As an individual human agent the artistic subject preserves the potentiality of negativity and resistance in its capacity to mediate between an unsatisfactory external world and the anticipation of other experiences, an anticipation representable in an aesthetically immanent way; whereas the dispersed subject is destined to resolve itself in a superior, if vaguely articulated, Nietzschean consciousness.

Such paradoxical, primitive, liberated energies as those invoked by Hilberseimer search for nothing less than new constitutions of reality. Chaos as the constitutive condition of the present reality; the present as the only reality from which art might emerge; art as the formation of a consciousness whose horizon is determined not by a mystique of the past, but by forms that reveal the essential movement of human reality toward the future: Hilberseimer corrects expressionist *anamnesis* precisely along the lines Ernst Bloch's notion of *anagnorisis*:

The doctrine of *anamnesis* claims that we have knowledge only because we formerly knew. But then there could be no fundamentally new knowledge, no future knowledge. The soul merely meets in reality now what it always already knew as idea. That is a circle within a circle and just as inaccurate as the other theory (*anagnorisis*) is revealing: that the new is never completely new for us because we bring something with us to measure by it.... *Anamnesis* provides the reassuring evidence of complete similarity; *anagnorisis*, however, is linked with reality by only a thin thread; it is therefore alarming. *Anamnesis* has an

element of attenuation about it; it makes everything a gigantic *déjà vu*, as if everything had already been, *nil novi subanamesi*. But *anagnorisis* is shock.⁸⁷

Hilberseimer could not have known of this formulation made by Bloch in 1968 or of his magnum opus Das Prinzip Hoffnung (1954-1959); nor have I found any evidence that he read Bloch's earlier Geist der Utopie (1918 and 1923). Yet the evocation of Bloch's thought is not arbitrary in the context of this examination of Hilberseimer's critical writings. For Bloch provides a way of conceptualizing the future and its relationship to the present and the primitive that is suggestive for an interpretation of Hilberseimer's own epistemology of art.

Bloch spent most of his intellectual life developing what he came to call his ontology of "not-yet-being" or philosophy of hope, and articulating a hermeneutics of restoration for the alienating and antagonistic cultural experiences of the present.⁸⁸ For Bloch, the present totality, the latitudinal whole, was not a homologous set of relationships and functions with one genetic center, such as the marxist mode of production. However homogeneous it may appear in reductive analyses of socio-economic essentiality, present reality truly comprised distinct, eccentric, and irreducible spheres such as religion, nature, and art, as well as production, which were not mere alienations produced by capitalism, and hence sublatale after its demise, but were rather a "consequence of the laboriousness of the founding of the Kingdom

⁸⁷Ernst Bloch, in a interview given in 1968; Michael Landmann, "Talking with Ernst Bloch: Korcula, 1968," Telos 25 (Fall, 1975): 178

⁸⁸On Bloch, see especially Martin Jay, Marxism and Totality (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 174 ff. and Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 116 ff.

[*Mühseligkeit der Reichsgründung*], which expresses itself in the temporal process, as well as spatially in the creation of spheres."⁸⁹ Furthermore, even while apparently complicitous with the unfulfilled present, these *Ungleichzeitig* (non-synchronous) spheres also contained emergent and at times explosive intimations of the future — *Spuren*, or figural traces, marks, and signs of the "not-yet" which undermine the dominant trends of the present.

Suspicious of claims that the past contained some archaic heritage of plenitude, and that some original meaning could be recovered from the memory of that past, Bloch stressed the interpenetration of present actuality and utopia — the present gives us raw material for a hope for plenitude in the future. "The real of the essence is that *which does not yet exist, which is in quest of itself in the core of things, and which is awaiting its genesis in the tendency and latency [Tendenz-Latenz] of the process.*"⁹⁰

As Fredric Jameson has argued, Bloch's utopia is, above all, a formal one.⁹¹ And it is therefore of little surprise that he finds in the forms of artworks and artifacts of daily life the most persuasive examples of attempts of the subject to rejoin in immediate experience with the things of the world, and to anticipate other possibilities. "Every great work of art, above and beyond its manifest content, is carried out according to a *latency of the page to come*, or in other words, in the light of the content of a future which has not yet come into being, and indeed of some ultimate resolution as yet

⁸⁹Ernst Bloch, "Aktualität und Utopie. Zu Lukács' *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*," reprinted in *Philosophische Aufsätze zur Objektiven Phantasie. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 10 (Frankfurt, 1969), 618; cited in Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 182

⁹⁰Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt; Suhrkamp, 1959) 2 vols., 41; emphasis in original

⁹¹Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 146.

unknown."⁹² The very form and structure of the work themselves "*represent an ontological anticipation [Vorschein] of the real which both transcends that limited and temporally developing object of the work and intends it at the same time*, an ontological anticipation precisely representable in an aesthetically immanent way. Here is illuminated what dull or habituated sense still scarcely sees, both in individual events, as well as in social or natural ones...."⁹³

Occasioned by the same social milieu and historical moment as Bloch's Geist der Utopie, Hilberseimer sought to redirect the historical trajectory of culture from the disasters that had befallen Europe since the First World War, and to discover behind the distortions of the present, through the apparatus of hope, hidden ciphers — basic, primal figures (whose forms we will see shortly), manifestations of the primitive moment of subject-object identity — for a transfigured world. "Our age is necessarily problematic. Perfection now would be judged hypocrisy, just as comfortable techniques retreat from the admission of the abyss...." But, "precedent teaches that every creative age follows from such a relaxation, loosening, and disintegration, like a perpetual antagonist.... Every revolution that disentangles a dismantled tradition is nothing less than the anticipation of a new becoming.... We live for as yet unfulfilled, unconcluded horizons, a future pregnant with hope."⁹⁴

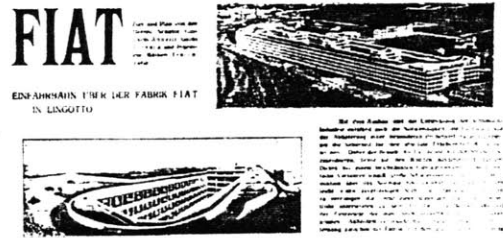
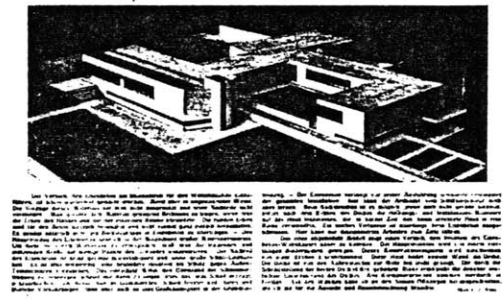
We must now return to an examination of the forms of this hope, to the ciphers for future to arise out of the chaos of the present. It is when these ciphers are fully conceptualized that Hilberseimer's architectural production can be fully understood.

⁹²Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung, 110; emphasis in original

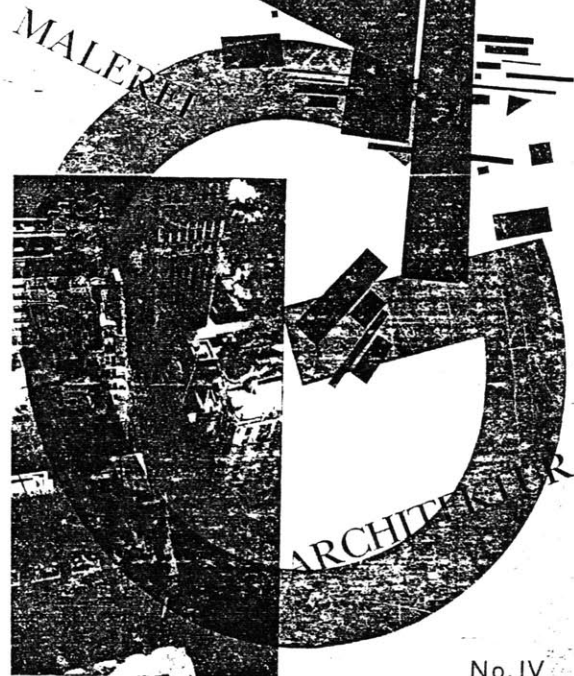
⁹³Ibid., 150; emphasis in original

⁹⁴Hilberseimer, "Schöpfung und Entwicklung," MS, 41

Hope beyond Chaos: on Expressionism and Dadaism

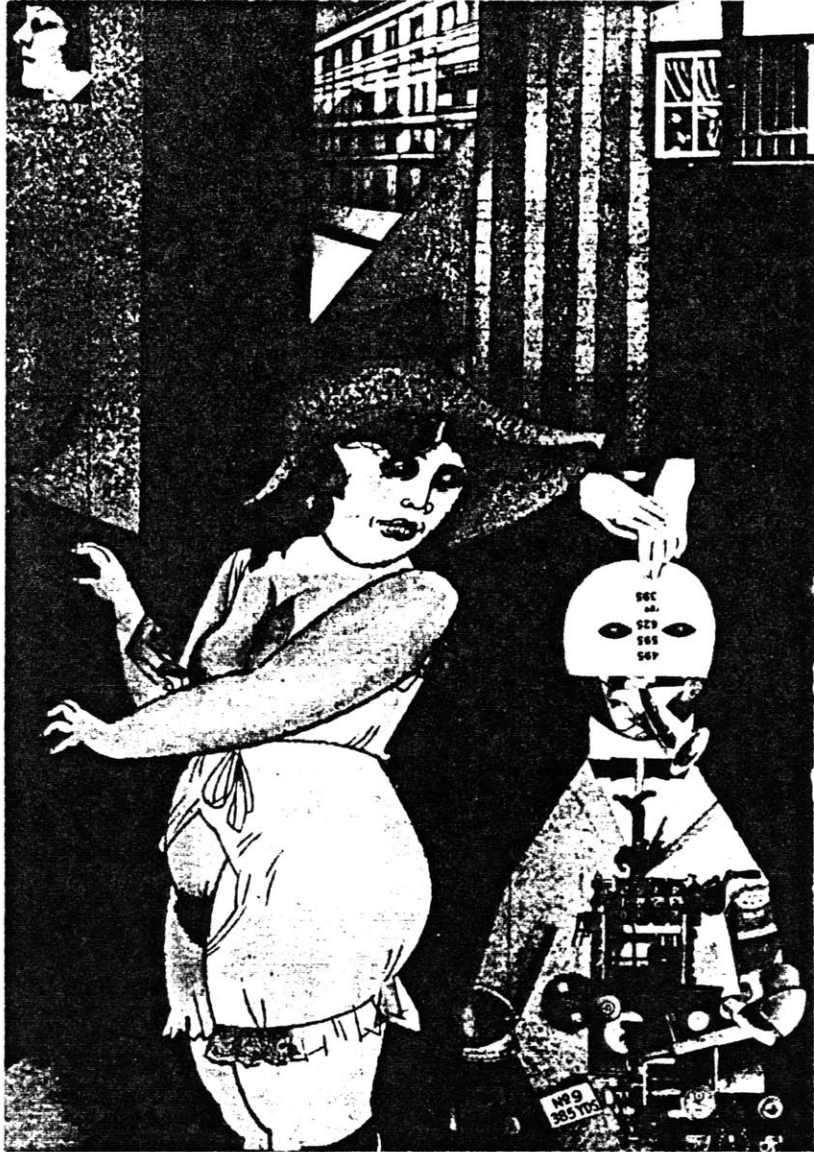


MÄRZ 1926



No. IV

- 412. Cover of G II (September 1923)
- 413. Cover of G IV (March 1926)



414. Georg Grosz, Meta-mechanische Konstruktion. 'Daum marries her pedantic automaton 'George' in May 1920, John Heartfield is very glad of it, 1920



415 (right). Raoul Hausmann, *Tête mécanique*, *L'Esprit de notre temps*, c. 1921
416. Hausmann, *Tatlin at Home*, 1920

Groszstadtarchitektur and Weimar-stimmung: the Paranoid Subject

Subjectivity, like objectivity, is an *effect* of a system of differences and deferrals. The subject is not a unified consciousness, but a variable and dispersed entity whose very identity and status is constituted in social practice. "[This] confirms that the subject, and first of all the conscious and speaking subject, depends upon the system of presence, that the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before *différance*, that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporising, in deferral."⁹⁵ Even though I use the words of recent critical theory to characterize subjectivity, there is no greater confirmation of this than the subject perceived by Hilberseimer as split between intentional human agency and dispersion across systems beyond the horizon of individual intention. The artistic will of the individual, which would seem to be the most certain sign of self identity, is in fact the obliteration of that identity, the disappearing of the self in the autonomy and determinateness of the *Kunstwollen* that extends before and beyond the individual even as the individual seems to emerge. "The I, now set free from meaningless bonds" is the I that "flows freely" into — is dispersed into — the structure of will.

⁹⁵Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone, 1981), 29

The subject as *Neutrum*

The psychic split perceived by Hilberseimer is, as we now know, the very condition of subjectivity under industrial capitalism. The lived experience of individual consciousness as a fragmented, compartmentalized, subjugated, and reified condition, coupled with the hope of some radical utopian agency of mediation and colligation is not just a glitch in our conceptualization of subjectivity which can be resolved either by reasserting a notion of individuality as a monadic and autonomous center of activity and freedom, or by voiding the category of the subject altogether. Rather the articulation of such an experience conjoined with such a hope conveys the precise historical moment at which the whole range of problems and questions constituting Hilberseimer's problematic is cut through, and the concrete cultural situation in which the emergence of his inscription of the posthumanist subject can be understood. For if Hilberseimer's writings often attempt to sound timeless and universally valid, his theoretical position, as I have attempted to locate it, can be conceived only as a production or a displacement of the very particular *Stimmung* of the Weimar Republic. Hilberseimer's ambivalence toward the metropolis — the sense of a disenchanting euphoria, the mood comprising almost equal parts of anxiety and elation, which finds its object in Berlin, the principal city of the early twentieth century and the focus of industry, production, consumption, massification, and all manner of worldliness — is just the ambivalence and paradox of Weimar culture, where modernity and negativity, higher consciousness and alienation, sobriety and unhappiness, authenticity and depthlessness, become almost inseparable. As Peter Sloterdijk writes,

The Weimar Republic is one of those historical phenomena through which we can best study how the modernization of a society has to be paid for.... In the intellegentsia, which consciously went through and participated in the process, there is no longer anywhere a "false consciousness" in the simple sense but rather dissolute consciousness on all sides.... Weimar art cynics train themselves to play masters of the situation, while the situation in fact is one in which things have gotten out of control and sovereignty is no longer possible.... They impudently place their poses against the equally overwhelming and mediocre destiny of the period: cynically allowing themselves to be swept along — Hey, we're alive. The modernization of unhappy consciousness.⁹⁶

In his study of Weimar culture, Critique of Cynical Reason, Sloterdijk uses Heidegger's concept of "Anyone" to characterize the *Stimmung* of Weimar in terms of the condition of subjectivity. Without seeking to make Hilberseimer's work a homologue of Heidegger's, it will be helpful here to draw a comparison between their respective theories of subjectivity — both of which turn on the deliberate confrontation with the objective conditions of the "everyday" metropolitan experience — in order to further characterize Hilberseimer's search to find material for the construction of a new consciousness which might replace a dysfunctional and discredited humanism. In the chapter "Anyone, or: The Most Real Subject of Modern Diffuse Cynicism," Sloterdijk elaborates Heidegger's turn toward the everyday, in a series of passages which are suggestive enough for our analysis here to quote at some length:

⁹⁶Peter Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [originally published as Kritik der zynischen Vernunft, 1983]), 385

[Heidegger] eavesdrops on the "subject" in the banality of the everyday mode of being. The existential ontology, which treats Anyone and its existence in everydayness, attempts something that would not have occurred even in a dream to earlier philosophy: to transform triviality into an object of "higher" theory.... A philosophy thus appears that participates ambivalently in a disillusioned, secularized, and technicized zeitgeist.... What is the rare being that Heidegger introduces under the name of Anyone? At first glance, it resembles modern sculptures that do not represent any definite object and whose polished surfaces do not admit of any "particular" meaning. Still, they are immediately real and firm to the touch. In this sense Heidegger emphasizes that Anyone is no abstraction — roughly, a general concept that comprises "all egos"; instead, he wants to relate, as *ens realissimum*, to something that is present in every one of us. But it disappoints the expectation of personalness, individual purport, and existentially decisive meaning. It exists but there is "nothing behind" it. It is there like modern, nonfigurative sculptures: real, everyday, concrete part of a world but not referring at any time to an actual person, a "real" meaning. Anyone is the neutrum of our ego: everyday ego, but not "I myself." It represents in a certain way my public side, my mediocrity. I have Anyone in common with everyone else; it is my public ego, and in relation to it, averageness is always in the right. As inauthentic ego, Anyone disposes of any highly personalized decisiveness (*Entschiedenheit*) of its own. By nature, it wants to make everything easy for itself, to take everything from the outside and to abide by conventional appearances. In a certain respect, it also behaves in this way toward itself, for what it is it "self" it also accepts, just like something it finds among other things that are simply givens. This Anyone can thus only be understood as something nonautonomous, which has nothing of itself or solely for itself. What it is is said and given by others; that explains its essential distractedness (*Zerstreutheit*).⁹⁷

⁹⁷Ibid., 195-7

With this, then, comes the initial set of points I should like to draw out in relation to Hilberseimer's construction of the metropolitan subject: First, banality, triviality, everydayness are now the proper material for a theory of art and architectural production. This much Hilberseimer gathered from dada. A rarefied and autonomous aesthetic is no longer possible in the modern city, whether for pleasurable aloofness *or* for resistance; instead a practice enmeshed in the everyday lifeworld is demanded. Second, the subject itself, to the extent of its relation with the structure of the everyday, cannot be thought as autonomous. Objectively structured like a mode of production, the subject is not so much an abstraction as a *Neutrum*. The character of the subject is given from the outside, and contradictorily. And thus it is, precisely, *distracted*. It is, at bottom, against this distraction which expressionism, unsuccessfully by Hilberseimer's lights, attempted to militate. Finally, as Sloterdijk demonstrates, the concept of distraction (*Zerstreuung*) is explicitly linked with postwar Weimar culture.

No other word is so saturated with a specific taste of the mid-twenties — of the first German modernity on a large scale. Everything we have heard about anyone would be, in the final analysis, inconceivable without the precondition of the Weimar Republic with its hectic postwar life feeling, its mass media, its Americanism, its entertainment and culture industry, its advanced system of distraction. Only in the cynical, demoralized, and demoralizing climate of a postwar society, in which the dead are not allowed to die (because from their downfall political capital is to be made), can an impulse be diverted out of the "zeitgeist" into philosophy to observe existence "existentially" and to place everydayness in opposition to "authentic," consciously decided existence as a "being unto death." Only after the military *Götterdämmerung*, after the

"disintegration of values," after the *coincidentia oppositorum* on the fronts of the material war, where "good and evil" dispatch each other into the "beyond" did such a critical "reflection" on "authentic being" become possible. In this period, for the first time attention is drawn in a radical way to the inner socialization. This period senses that reality is dominated by spooks, imitators, remote-controlled ego machines. Each person could be a double (*Wiedergänger*) instead of itself. But how can one recognize this? In whom can one still see whether it is "it-self" or only Anyone? This question stimulates in existentialists deep cares about the important but impossible distinction between the genuine and the nongenuine, the authentic and the inauthentic, the articulated and the inarticulated, the decided and the undecided (which is simply "as it is"). [Heidegger put it this way:]

Everything looks as though it is genuinely understood, comprehended and said, but basically it is not, or it does not look as though it is, but basically it is.⁹⁸

Sloterdijk makes it clear that the ambivalence of Heidegger's language in this last quotation, an ambivalence born of the acute recognition of distractedness, should not be understood cognitively (in the terms of science or information or knowledge) but rather existentially. It is the existential pathos of the ambivalence that must be grasped. It is this sort of ambivalence that leads Heidegger (and I am arguing Hilberseimer as well) to search for authenticity in the very inauthenticity of Weimar, to search for a mode of existence other than the present *in the very conditions of the present*. "The Other can initially be asserted only by simultaneously averring that it looks precisely like the One; seen from the outside, the 'authentic' does not distinguish itself from the

⁹⁸Ibid., 199. The quotation of Heidegger is from *Sein und Zeit*, 173.

'inauthentic' in any way."⁹⁹ What society gives us as an existential reality — a firmly ensconced structure of reification — already binds us to inauthenticity. And yet a difference can be made, though the difference must needs look much the same as the condition it opposes: hence, the dimension of resistance, hope, and redemption found within ambivalence.

As long as ambivalence is at least still asserted as a fundamental feature of existence, the possibility of the "other dimension" remains formally salvaged. With this, Heidegger's movement of thought (*Denkbewegung*) seems to already exhaust itself: in a formal salvaging of the authentic, which of course, can look exactly like the "inauthentic".... Alienation, we learn, does not mean that existence had been wrenched from its "self", but rather that the inauthenticity of this alienation is from the start the most powerful and the most primitive mode of being of existence. In existence there is nothing that, in an evaluative sense, could be called bad, negative, or false. Alienation is simply the mode of being of Anyone.¹⁰⁰

This characterization of subjectivity in Sloterdijk's extraordinary explication of Heidegger's philosophy merges with the conditions of subjectivity already described in the distinct but related aesthetic practices of expressionism and dadaism as construed by Hilberseimer. And Weimar is the primary locus of the development of these conditions, which I have taken the terms reification, rationalization, and alienation to denote. It is in this sense that we can reassert that Hilberseimer's theoretical production is fundamentally a historical act.

⁹⁹Ibid., 199.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 200-201.

But it is with the publication of his book Groszstadtarchitektur in 1927 (fig. 417) that what only begins to emerge in the consideration of dada and expressionism is fully thematized in Hilberseimer's theory: namely, a specific consideration of the external economic structures and modes of production of which the subject (and the subject's distraction) is an effect. Furthermore, it is with the publication of the *Hochhausstadt* project in Groszstadtarchitektur that we find more fully explicated the relationship between structural causality¹⁰¹ and architectural form, along with the proposal of the possible, if as yet only imperfectly realized and only vaguely discernible, future architectural form. It is here, then, that Hilberseimer's theory of the subject as we have constructed it from his writings can be rejoined with the consideration of his architectural projects with which we began this section of the present study. The theoretical and historical moment of Hilberseimer's production is just this exigency to construct the new form, the new order, the utopian configuration of *grosstädtiche* society, from the chaos of the present. Hilberseimer maintains an ambivalent commitment; indeed, he "asserts" an ambivalence toward that hegemonic mode of production of his own present, which, as he understands it, both intends and anticipates the future to be diverted out of the waste products of bourgeois humanism.

¹⁰¹Here a contradiction may be sensed relative to my earlier suggestion that Hilberseimer's architecture/reality is not so much one of causality but of parallelism. But I will try to show presently that *simple* causality is not an adequate characterization, but only a preliminary one.

Groszstadtarchitektur as effect of industrial capitalism

Hilberseimer begins his book with a concise characterization of the *Großstadt* which conjoins its identification as a multinational economic organism with a description of its psychological effects.

The present type of large city owes its birth above all to the economic form of capitalist imperialism which is in turn closely connected to the evolution of science and of production techniques. Its possibilities surpass by far the sphere of the national economy, and its influence is reflected ever more strongly on the world economy. With the maximum concentration and an extensive and complete organization it achieves a superabundance of intensity and energy: as soon as production does not find a sufficient outlet for its own exigencies, there is a move toward overproduction and toward antagonism with other countries, and a tendency to the stimulation of needs rather than to their satisfaction. Thus the large city appears primarily as the creation of omnipotent large capital and therefore imprinted with anonymity. Furthermore, it is a type of city with its own socio-economic and psycho-collective bases, in which is found at the same time the maximum isolation and the densest crowding together of its inhabitants. In it, an enormously intensified rhythm of life [*verstärkter Lebensrhythmus*] very rapidly represses every local and individual element.¹⁰²

One cannot but connect this characterization of metropolitan anonymity, intensity, and leveling with Simmel's *Nervenleben*, conceived as a result of the bombardment of undifferentiated, free-floating, and contradictory images all generated by the monetary economy. According to Hilberseimer, though the advanced capitalism of the

¹⁰²Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1927), 1-2

bourgeoisie had brought this city into being, the bourgeoisie had not been able to control it. Through parasitic, speculative enterprise, the city had fallen into disorganization. Only in a "socially ordered society where production corresponds to the needs of men, not the greed for profits of privileged individuals, will the metropolis become a meaningful organism."¹⁰³

And so the *Großstadt* is also, for Hilberseimer, a productive organism in its own right.

The great cities... were stamped as parasitic with respect to the rest of the country and considered as organisms capable only of consumption and not of production. Their true nature has been completely misconstrued, and the fact ignored that it is precisely the large cities that automatically increase the productive process, taking over with ever-increasing rapidity and ability the direction of the economy and contributing in a substantial way to the material and spiritual productivity of the country.¹⁰⁴

Hilberseimer here reveals the result of the profound influence exercised on radical culture by the intelligentsia of "democratic capitalism." Not by chance he cites Henry Ford, whose autobiography of "enlightened" capitalism, Mein Leben und Werk, had appeared in German in 1923, and who had become something of an apostle of assembly-line techniques and scientific management but also of productive capital. But it was Walter Rathenau who had already seen that, within the expanding cycle of production and consumption, "mechanical production has elevated itself to an aim in

¹⁰³Ibid., 2

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

itself;"¹⁰⁵ and had already expressed an ironic disdain for the person who would futilely try to hold to old beliefs and values:

Now he strives with cunning to regain what has been lost and plants little shrines in his mechanized world, just as roof gardens are laid out on factory buildings. From the inventory of the times, here a cult of nature is searched out, there a superstition, a communal life, an *artificial naïveté*, a false serenity, an ideal of power, an art of the future, a purified Christianity, a nostalgic preoccupation with the past, a stylization. *Half believing, half dissembled*, devotion is given for a while, until fashion and boredom kill the idol.¹⁰⁶

What is more, Rathenau's description of the large cities that "shoot their petrified street-threads over the country side," and of massive constructions that directly and indirectly serve production¹⁰⁷ are echoed in Hilberseimer's expansion of metropolitan laws such

¹⁰⁵Walter Rathenau, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 2 (1977), 52

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 93. It is interesting to compare Rathenau's cynical irony with Ernst Jünger's aestheticization of war technology and the *Fronterlebnis*, but also with the opposite reactions of recent liberal humanist evaluations of Hilberseimer's architecture. Richard Pommer, for example, remarks that "it is of course the total elimination of nature that is so shocking and deadening in Hilberseimer's city...", and that his avantgardism "does not help to explain the equally depressing absence of any visual excitement or pleasure in Hilberseimer's necropolis..." Richard Pommer, "'More a Necropolis than a Metropolis.'" Ludwig Hilberseimer's Highrise City and Modern City Planning," in *In the Shadow of Mies* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1988), 34-35. The point of this mention of Pommer's lament is not, of course, to choose the aesthetic preferences of Rathenau or Jünger over Pommer, but rather to insist that aesthetic preferences *in se* can no longer be the basis of an interpretation of Hilberseimer.

¹⁰⁷Rathenau's striking description of the mechanization of the city is worth repeating: "Visible and invisible networks of rolling traffic crisscross and undermine the vehicular ravines and twice daily pump human bodies from the limbs to the heart. A second, third, fourth network distributes water, heat and power, an electrical bundle of nerves carries the resonances of the spirit.... Honeycomb cells, fitted out with silky fabrics, paper, timber, leather, tapestries, are ordered into rows; outwardly supported by iron, stone, glass, cement.... Only in the old centers of the cities... residues of physiognomical peculiarities are still maintained as almost extinct showpieces, while in the surrounding districts... the international world warehouse extends...." "What then is the purpose of these unheard-of constructions? In large part, they directly serve production. In part, they serve transport and trade, and thus indirectly production. In part, they serve administration, domicile and health care, and thus predominantly production. In part, they serve science, art, technology, education, recreation, and thus indirectly... once again production." Rathenau, 22, 51, respectively

that "from the building of the city one arrives at the building of the country."¹⁰⁸

According to Hilberseimer,

From the fusion of national or multinational states we will arrive at economic unions: for us, above all, the fusion of the European continent, today politically torn apart, into a single economic entity, will constitute the premise for an avant-garde urban policy in a productive sense, which will finally lead to the solution of the problem of the *Großstadt*.¹⁰⁹

But what must be underscored in the present context is Rathenau's cogent description of the laboring subject as an epiphenomenon of the apparatus of production: "Labor is no longer an activity of life, no longer an accommodation of the body and the soul to the forces of nature, but a thoroughly alien activity for the purpose of life, *an accommodation of the body and the soul to the mechanism....*"¹¹⁰ If the subject does not wish to be merely a cog in the the city-machine, it must stretch itself out across the machine in unresisting accommodation. Here, again, the assertion of capitalism and mass reproduction — taken together as the sign of the determination to crush the individual and to pass from the sentimentalization of individual distress to a new, postindividualist framework — emerges as a primary constituent of Weimar modernity, even as it calls into question, as thoroughly as Hilberseimer's art critical writings, any expressive or reflective model of subject construction.

¹⁰⁸Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*, 20

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 21

¹¹⁰Rathenau, 67; my emphasis

For Hilberseimer, as for Rathenau, advanced capitalism harbors contradictory forces. It is, on the one hand, the structural precondition of modernity, whose force blasts subject from object and recolonizes the fragments of each in terms of purely instrumental and functional categories (thus promoting what Hilberseimer saw as the overdevelopment of science, know-how, and technique). It is, at the same time, the proleptic basis for, if not a direct experience, then at least the figural projection of a future restructuring of experience. Capitalism is itself the only force capable of organizing and harmonizing the dissonance of an otherwise random concatenation of objects and events into a rationalized totality. The "evil" of the *Großstadt* is in capitalistic "abuse," not in capitalism's substance. For capitalism itself is but an obscured form of reason, and its productive attributes — rationalization, Fordism, Taylorism, planification — and the corresponding massified subjectivity are constitute what we might call Hilberseimer's "concrete utopia."¹¹¹

Here, too, the full ideological force of Hilberseimer's proposition of the *Hochhausstadt* (figs. 418 and 419) can be felt — properly ideological just to the degree that it produces an entire image and structure of subject/object relations in an irreducibly aesthetic modality. Without ever leaving the terrain of the architectural project, Hilberseimer's total solution for the city projects a vehicle for our understanding and experience of an actual, concrete, historical situation of everyday social life that is intolerable but inescapable. One might speculate (in order to make to point more vivid) that the inhabitants of Hilberseimer's *Hochhausstadt* are the very metropolitan subjects

¹¹¹Ernst Bloch referred to the *Fronterlebnis* — with its community of males uncorrupted by capitalist exchange — as Ernst Jünger's "concrete utopia."

cynically portrayed in the drawings and paintings of Grosz, Dix, and Hausmann, or in Heidegger's picture of "Anyone." The vocation of architectural theory is thereby revealed as the exigency to produce the image, the referent, the *Stimmung* — the matter-of-factness, the new "intensified rhythms of life,"¹¹² the new ascetic, desacralized, and disenchanting objects, as well as the marked and expectant absence at the heart of the actual, perceptible spaces in this city — in short, that very life world of intolerable ambiguity, contradiction, and abstraction of which theory can then claim to be the opposition, resolution, and displacement. Hilberseimer confirms that any future solution has its precondition in present fact.

The chaos of the city of today can be opposed only by attempts at theoretical systematization, having the purpose of *enucleating from actual situations* — in a totally abstract way — the fundamental principles of urban planning, thereby arriving at the formulation of general norms that then permit the solution of determined concrete problems. Only the abstraction of the specific case enables, us, in fact, to demonstrate how the disparate elements that make up a large city can be placed, in an orderly way, in relationship with the whole.¹¹³

While Hilberseimer in his art critical writings had argued against the abstraction of pictorial representation,¹¹⁴ it is the architectural abstraction of metropolitan actuality that is now staged as the path to concreteness. Though the *Hochhausstadt* has usually been interpreted in purely technocratic, functional, and organizational terms,¹¹⁵ it seems to

¹¹²Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Dadaismus," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 26, nos. 25-26 (1920): 1120-1122

¹¹³Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*, 13; my emphasis

¹¹⁴See previous part of this section of the thesis.

¹¹⁵For example, Gustav Stotz, the organizer of the Werkbund Weissenhof exhibition in Stuttgart in 1927, in a review of *Groszstadtarchitektur*, declared that Hilberseimer "proceeds in his observations

be more correct in the larger context of Hilberseimer's theory of art — which in general tends toward an ever greater degree of formalization if not abstraction — to construe it as a logical and necessary progression of his thought toward a more purely and completely formal incarnation. In the conjunction of Hilberseimer's theory with his projects for metropolitan architecture we will see that his "enucleations" from actual situations are nothing less, and nothing more, than elementary signs for an architectural "not-yet," to use again Bloch's sense of the term.

Groszstadtarchitektur as production of Spuren

As early as 1919,¹¹⁶ in one of the few preserved examples of his early work, Hilberseimer had organized his ideas for a *Kleinstadt* in a delicate but austere drawing in one-point perspective (fig. 421), in a technique that followed Heinrich Tessenow's drawing style used for representing his *Heimatstil* rural buildings (fig. 420), and Friedrich Ostendorf's theoretical insistence on reduced, symmetrical building forms determined by functional program and the spatial implications of concomitant streets, plazas, and gardens.¹¹⁷ The enfilade of repetitive single-family houses converge

from the decisive formative factors — economic, social and technical — without historical restrictions, and leaves the formal and aesthetic side of the problem as a secondary concern." Gustav Stotz, "Werkbund Gedanken," in *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt, Beiblatt*, 25 August 1928 (Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, Series 9/5, Folder 5). Manfredo Tafuri is one of the few recent critics to find more than summary importance to Hilberseimer and the *Hochhausstadt* project. See especially the chapter "Sozialpolitik and the City in Weimar Germany," in his *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987 [orig. Italian, 1980]).

¹¹⁶The date is not certain. Hilberseimer's drawing of a Palace design, published in *Deutsche Bauhütte* 10 (1906), is his first published design. The drawing for a village mentioned here may be from the same period, though it is most likely from a later group of drawings submitted to the *Ausstellung unbekannter Architekten* in April 1919.

¹¹⁷See Heinrich Tessenow, *Die Wohnhausbau* (Munich, 1909); Paul Mebes, *Um 1800, Architektur und Handwerk im letzten Jahrhundert ihrer traditionellen Entwicklung* (Munich, 1908); and Friedrich

toward a public building differentiated from the residences only by the organization of its windows. The scheme is striking in its reduction and indifference, and it was to serve as the formal armature from which Hilberseimer was to develop all of his later urban proposals.

But it was his personal contact with, and his analyses and absorption of the most advanced experiments of the elementarist avantgardes that provided Hilberseimer with the conceptual mechanisms necessary for a decisive shift away from the classicizing tendencies and stylistic influences of Tessenow and Ostendorf, and toward his ultimate solution.¹¹⁸ For Hilberseimer, it was Cézanne who had initiated the shift toward "*elementare Gestaltung*" in his revelation of "the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder; using these starting points nature can be moulded into new figures. His pictures enable one to perceive once again what an organism is, what figuration is.... For the first time his work rises above the chaos of the confused world."¹¹⁹ Cézanne "opened the way to cubism," which continued this development:

Cubism is essentially a structure of planes mediating contrasting subdivisions. It has recognized the particular ordinance of the work of art, like an extraordinary organism with iron-clad laws of structure. It has consciously touched on the elements of all formations, returning to geometric-cubic form. It has recognized the identity between matter and form. In cubist works, in fact,

Ostendorf, *Sechs Bücher vom Bauen* (Berlin, 1913-22). Ostendorf was Hilberseimer's teacher at the Grand Ducal Technical University Fredericiana in Karlsruhe.

¹¹⁸For example, see Hilberseimer, "Konstruktivismus," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 28 (1922): 831-34; and "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst," *Sammlung Gabrielson Göteborg 1922-23* (Art Institute of Chicago, Series 1/1, Folder 1/4), trans. in Manfredo Tafuri, "USSR-Berlin 1922: From Populism to the 'Constructivist International,'" in Joan Ockman, et al., eds., *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 179-83.

¹¹⁹Hilberseimer, "Cézanne," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 28, nos. 1-2 (1922): 64

one sees the contrasts of manufacture and varied materials forced into unity by compositional points of view. An artistic principle, which [Schwitters] *Merzkunst* has systematically elaborated.¹²⁰

I should underscore here the mediational role — understood in the sense I have discussed earlier — between art and reality ascribed by Hilberseimer to cubism and the Merz work. As well as Schwitters, it was Archipenko (fig. 422) who for Hilberseimer recapitulated this overall scheme of development, beginning as an expressionist sculptor, then developing his "dynamic-constructivist fantasies" through analogies with and syntheses of the forms of "New York skyscrapers, glass constructions, of the machine and the airplane.... Through the reduction to the fundamental he came to his synthesis of form."¹²¹ And finally, whereas "Suprematism carried non-objective art to its ultimate possibilities," and "seeks the point of nothingness in art," it was the constructivists who "have traveled a new path. That of reality."

From construction in painting the constructivists have moved on to the construction of objects. To architecture in the broadest sense of the word. Constructivism is the logical consequence of methods of work that are based on the collectivity of our time. Thus it has a base that is of a general rather than a subjective nature. It perceives the subordination of art to society without reserve, as of all of life. It seeks its elements in the expressions of our mechanized and industrialized time. Mathematical clarity, geometrical rigor, functional organization, extreme economy, and the most exact possible

¹²⁰Hilberseimer, "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst"

¹²¹Hilberseimer, "Archipenko," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, May 1921 (Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, Series 8/3, Box 5/43): 465-66. Compare Hilberseimer's analysis of Archipenko's synthesis of New York skyscrapers, etc. to his own appropriation of the same in his architecture.

constructiveness are problems that are not only technical but also eminently artistic. They determine what is properly essential in our epoch. The constructivist method brings any object into the gamit of formation. Not suppressing liveliness, but forming a reality. The works of the Constructivists are, when all is said and done, nothing but experiments with materials. They consciously work toward a solution to the new problems posed by material and by form. Theirs are merely works of a transition toward functional architectural constructions. The ultimate goal is a well-disciplined preparation for architecture.¹²²

It was Hilberseimer's introjection of the formal experiments of the avantgarde that sponsored this movement toward elementary form and enabled his subsequent architectural designs. "To develop adequate types for [the buildings of which our cities consists] according to their purpose and function, the materials used and the structures employed, constitute the real problems which the Elementarists have to solve."¹²³ In Groszstadtarchitektur, Hilberseimer projected his evolutionary schema toward its ultimate destiny in elementarist architecture.

Like every discipline, architecture, too, is confronted with the pressing need to define its fundamental principles and the means at its disposition. In this regard, painting has carried out a valuable preliminary task, by focusing attention for the first time on the fundamental forms of every art: geometric and cubic elements, which represent a maximum of objectification. The simple

¹²²Hilberseimer, "Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst"

¹²³The passage continues, "This will lead to an architecture which is direct and free from all romantic reminescences, in agreement with present daily life, not subjective and individualistic, but objective and universal.... Clarity, logic, thoughtfulness will lead to a unification. All architectural work, as different as it may be, is the result of the same spirit, an unfolding of it." Hilberseimer, "Berlin School of Architecture of the Twenties," unpublished translation of Berliner Architektur der 20er Jahre (1967) (Hilberseimer Archives, Art Institute of Chicago Series 8/1, Folder 7/10), 51-52.

solid bodies — the cube, the sphere, the prism, the cylinder, the pyramid, the cone — pure compositional elements — are fundamentals of all architecture. The exactness of their definition requires formal clarity and imposes order on chaos, in the most concrete ways.¹²⁴

Late in 1923 Hilberseimer designed his second scheme for dwellings, the *Wohnstadt* for 125,000 people (fig. 424), first published in 1925 by Kurt Schwitters as *Merz 18/19*¹²⁵ and later in *Groszstadtarchitektur*. It is stylistically altogether different from his earlier *Kleinstadt* project. A related drawing (fig. 425) published as an illustration of Hilberseimer's "Der Wille zur Architektur,"¹²⁶ provides what can be taken as a model for the public building shown at the center of the *Wohnstadt* perspective, and is itself the "same" building as the Chicago Tribune save some volumetric redistribution (compare fig. 408). But Hilberseimer's repetition works at a structural level as well as an imagistic one. The *Wohnstadt* project comprises walk-up apartments organized on a *Zeilenbau* system, with thin slabs oriented north-south, and commercial spaces housed in lower blocks along the wider east-west streets (fig. 424a). Rapid transit lines are sunken along the axis of the plan, connecting the residential satellite town to the main city, which was to be for work and business only. The apartments are minimal, modeled on American hotels (fig. 424d). But what is remarkable is how the definitive perspective of the project (fig. 424b) repeats that of the *Kleinstadt* project of 1919 — in the construction of the perspective, in the functional

¹²⁴Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*, 99-100

¹²⁵Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtbauten* (Hanover: Aposch-Verlag, 1925)

¹²⁶Hilberseimer, "Der Wille zur Architektur," *Das Kunstblatt* 5 (May 1923): 133-140; illustration is on p. 140, captioned "Entwurf zu einem Fabrikbau." The project was further developed and published in Hilberseimer, "Groszstädtische Kleinwohnungen," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 32 (1929): 1-6.

disposition of the public building and the residences, in the street space defined by the buildings (compare fig. 421). Here we return to the radical repetition and denunciation of invention with which, as we have seen, Hilberseimer was involved, but now we see it within the very gestation and formation of the project.

Here, too, we witness Hilberseimer's version of what Bloch called *Spuren*, or figural traces and signs of the latent "not-yet" which arise out of, but seek to undermine, the dominant trends of the present. Recall Bloch's suggestion that these "*represent an ontological anticipation of the real which both transcends that limited and temporally developing object of the work and intends it at the same time, an ontological anticipation precisely representable in an aesthetically immanent way.*"¹²⁷

Hilberseimer's *Spuren* are "the cube, the sphere, the prism, the cylinder, the pyramid, the cone — pure compositional elements" whose exactness of definition and formal clarity "*imposes order on chaos, in the most concrete ways.*" In the *Wohnstadt* the "valuable preliminary" elementarist studies analyzed by Hilberseimer find their architectural analogue in the reiterative cell and converge with the distracted subjectivity given by Weimar culture. All of which produces architectural *Spuren* structured on radical repetition, seriality, and asserted ambivalence toward the actual situations from which they emerge.

In architecturalizing the elementary forms of the pictorial avant-garde, Hilberseimer also reconnects his research with the most advanced urban planning projects of the time. It is the *Wohnstadt* and Le Corbusier's Contemporary City of

¹²⁷Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt; Suhrkamp, 1959) 2 vols., 150; emphasis in original

Three Million of 1922 that stands between Hilberseimer's *Kleinstadt* project of 1905 and the *Hochhausstadt* of 1924 (figs. 418, 419).¹²⁸ According to Hilberseimer, the failure of Le Corbusier's project was in its faulty calculation of possible densities of the residential area and its inability to solve the traffic problems; it was these shortcomings which prompted Hilberseimer's critique of Le Corbusier's effort. Hilberseimer's project relates the residential and commercial functions by superimposing fifteen-story apartment slabs onto five-story commercial volumes in 600 meter by 100 meter city blocks and coordinating the pedestrian and vehicular traffic specific to each in separate levels. Hannes Meyer's conceptualization of nomadic space is here made fully concrete. For the elevators and rapid transit systems and the coordinated places of dwelling and work eliminate the need (and the possibility) of bourgeois domestic entourage. But what is most striking is, again, the repetition of the *Kleinstadt* and the *Wohnstadt* project(s), now with almost no modification of the latter other than an increase in size, the separation of traffic, and the addition in the perspective of metropolitan people walking the streets of the city, evenly dispersed by the flow of the city's forces (figs. 418, 419). This last addition is a pictorial adjustment which thematizes what was already implicit in the earlier projects: that the constitution of the metropolitan subject is fundamental to this architecture. The differential play of subject and object now finds literal representation.

¹²⁸Hilberseimer pointed out that the *Hochhausstadt* was at once a critique and an homage to Le Corbusier's project, what he called the only other fundamental, theoretical demonstration of the problem of giving form to the chaos of the metropolis. Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*, 13. "Le Corbusier does not concentrate [the density of the population], as it seems at first glance, but only orders and improves. Without any change in principle. Without rethinking the problem anew." *Ibid.*, 15

In Hilberseimer's constant repetition of his own project we find confirmation that, in the long run, the content of the new architecture stands judged by its form, which is the most certain index to the actual, vital possibilities of that social moment from which it springs. Hilberseimer's evolutionary schema involves a constant movement away from the gritty and complicated factuality of society and toward the various determinate, elementary traces to which society's content can be reduced, and whose conceptual limits and inadequacies stand as immediate figures of the limits of the concrete social situation itself. I have been describing the force of this movement as reification, but we must find another interpretive language with which to comprehend the now superattenuated link between architectural form — understood as a system of signs which is "semi-autonomous" (in an Althusserian sense) — and the cultural sphere or "structural totality" which is its ultimate referent. And if over-eager assertions of "a free-play of signifiers" or "the discourse of the simulacral" (*a la* Baudrillard) seem premature, we must nevertheless find some way to explicate a signifying practice like Hilberseimer's, which generates formal patterns and subjectivities but, freed from the ballast of interiority and plentitude, seems nevertheless to hover above the everyday lifeworld in mid-air.

Groszstadtarchitektur as mass ornament

Siegfried Kracauer once defined the intention of his critical analyses of the "surface manifestations of an epoch" which resemble "the *aerial photographs* of landscapes and cities for [they do] not emerge from the interior of a given reality, but

rather appear above it."¹²⁹ Kracauer writes, "Spatial images [*Raumbilder*] are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of these images can be deciphered, one finds the basis of social reality."¹³⁰ For Kracauer, the aesthetic topography of mass culture is the surface that reveals the movement of society within a historical context, and what he called "the mass ornament" was, in the Taylorized culture of Weimar, "the aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system."¹³¹ It is Kracauer's notion of the mass ornament that I would propose as the concept with which to frame my conclusions about Hilberseimer's work.

Kracauer's predominant example of mass ornament is the Tiller Girls, an American dance troupe who began performing in Berlin during the period of inflation.

Not only were they American products; at the same time they demonstrated the greatness of American production. I distinctly recall to appearance of such troupes in the season of their glory. When they formed an undulating snake, they radiantly illustrated the virtues of the conveyor belt; when they tapped their feet in fast tempo, it sounded like *business, business*; when they kicked their legs high with mathematical precision, they joyously affirmed the progress of rationalization; and when they kept repeating the same movements without ever interrupting their routine, one envisioned an uninterrupted chain of autos gliding from the factories into the world, and believed that the blessings of prosperity had no end.¹³²

¹²⁹Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," *New German Critique* 5 (Spring 1975): 69; emphasis in original

¹³⁰Siegfried Kracauer, "Über Arbeitsnachweise," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 17 June 1930; reprinted in Kracauer, *Strassen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt, 1964), 70.

¹³¹Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," 70

¹³²Siegfried Kracauer, "Girls und Krise," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 26 May 1931; quoted in Karsten Witte, "Introduction to Siegfried Kracauer's 'The Mass Ornament'," *New German Critique* 5 (Spring 1975): 63-64.

Like the constellations of Tiller Girls, Hilberseimer's mass ornament generates a correspondingly massified subject: "Only as parts of a mass, not as individuals who believe themselves to be formed from within, are human beings components of a pattern."¹³³ And like the Tiller Girls, Hilberseimer's mass ornament is an end in itself. According to Kracauer, the mass ornament — unlike military demonstrations, say, whose aesthetic order is a means to an end, or in any case, tied to feelings of patriotism, loyalty, and morality, or gymnastic configurations which have a functional and hygienic dimension — has neither aesthetic nor functional meaning. "In the end there is the closed ornament, whose life components have been drained of their substance."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, in a series of passages remarkable for their relation to what we have seen in Hilberseimer's work, Kracauer takes a position against cultural pessimism and attempts to redeem the mass ornament, precisely because of its structural relationship to the cultural totality. I shall therefore quote from the essay at length.

The ornament, detached from its bearers, must be understood *rationaly*. It consists of degrees and circles like those found in textbooks of euclidean geometry. Waves and spirals, the elementary structures of physics, are also included: discarded are the proliferations of organic forms and the radiations of spiritual life. Hereafter, the Tiller Girls can no longer be reassembled as human beings. Their mass gymnastics are never performed by whole, autonomous bodies whose contortions would deny rational understanding. Arms, thighs and other segments are the smallest components of the composition.

¹³³Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," 68

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 68

The structure of the mass ornament reflects that of the general contemporary situation. Since the principle of the *capitalist production process* does not stem purely from nature, it must destroy the natural organisms which it regards either as a means or as a force of resistance. Personality and national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) perish when calculability is demanded; only as a tiny particle of the mass can the individual human being effortlessly clamber up charts and service machines. A system which is indifferent to variations of forms leads necessarily to the obliteration of national characteristics and to the fabrication of masses of workers who can be employed and used uniformly throughout the world.

Like the mass ornament, the capitalist production process is an end in itself.... It is conceived according to rational principles which the Taylor system only takes to its final conclusion. The hands in the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller Girls.... The mass ornament is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system.

... I would argue that the *aesthetic* pleasure gained from the ornamental mass movements is *legitimate*. They belong in fact to the isolated configurations of the time, configurations, which imbue a given material with form. The masses which are arranged in them are taken from offices and factories. The structural principle upon which they are modeled determines them in reality as well. When great amounts of reality-content are no longer visible in our world, art must make do with what is left, for an aesthetic presentation is all the more real the less it dispenses with the reality outside the aesthetic sphere. No matter how low one rates the value of the mass ornament, its level of reality is still above that of artistic productions which cultivate obsolete noble sentiments in withered forms — even when they have no further significance.¹³⁵

¹³⁵Ibid., 69-70; emphasis in original.

For Kracauer, as for Hilberseimer, capitalism is a stage in the process of demystification (*Entzauberung*) by which history, through reason, continually dismantles those superstructural and naturalizing myths whose regressive effect is to prolong the notion of some unchanging and proprietary human essence.

However, the rationale of the capitalist economic system is not reason itself but obscured reason.... *It does not encompass human beings.* The operation of the production process is not set up to take them into consideration, nor is the formation of the socio-economic organization based on them. There is not one single instance where the system is based on human essences.... Capitalism does not rationalize too much but *too little*.¹³⁶

For Kracauer, as for Hilberseimer, the sign of capitalist thought is abstraction, but the present state of abstractness is ambivalent; its alternative poles are the growth of abstract thought or the decline into false concreteness.¹³⁷ All of which means that the process of demystification and demythologizing is incomplete. In this context, Hilberseimer's constant reassertion of the cube, the sphere, the prism, the cylinder, the pyramid, the cone, the cell — all depleted, austere, abstract pictorial and architectural forms — should not seem surprising, and neither should his ambivalence be understood as a legitimate mode of architectural thought. The mass ornament *just is* this abstraction and this ambivalence, and the recognition of the ornament is the recognition that the possibility for a more concrete, articulate, private figure of redemption for the present has been foreclosed by modernity itself.

¹³⁶Ibid., 72

¹³⁷Recall the analysis of Hilberseimer's art theory at the beginning of the second part of this section.

Groszstadtarchitektur as paranoid totalization

But to dwell only on ambivalence, abstraction, and distraction is to miss the other, dialectically related side of the *Weimar-stimmung*. Initially, this could be characterized as a kind of euphoria or *jouissance*. The concept unites the experiences of orgasmic pleasure, death, and the moment of self-obliteration. Roland Barthes describes the *texte de jouissance* as a text that takes an quasi-erotic pleasure in accomplishing the death of its subject in two senses: the dissolution of its topic (subject matter) and its person (the author or reader). The *texte de jouissance* is a text in which "language is in pieces, and culture is in pieces" and where nothing can be recovered from the social vacuum through conformity to the "canonical languages" of society. Such a text produces a "fading" of the subject by destroying all possible meanings; it creates a "hole" which "swallows the subject of the game — the subject of the text" by "rocking the reader's historical, cultural, and psychological foundations and the consistency of his tastes, values, and memories." But if the text is nihilistic, it also, at the same time, contains "the trace of an affirmation."¹³⁸ This is the same contradiction of negation and affirmation that we find in Hilberseimer. For as his work of dissolution is continued — penetrating not only the abstract and ambivalent ornamental sign, and threatening not only the human *body*, but now the very interior of that other entity (whose construction on the model of the body we have already analyzed), *the distracted subject itself* — we witness, first, the vision of the humanist subject seared

¹³⁸Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975 [orig. French 1973]), 23, 25-26, 36-36, respectively

hard, brittle, and transparent to the exterior forces of which it is an effect, and then, the final break-up of the subject in mid-air. This is the ephoria of self liquidation through mechanization once again perhaps, but now, unlike with dadaism or Meyer, with no resistant materiality left as residue.

The human figure used in this mass ornament has begun its *exodus* from the organic splendor and individual constituency [*Gestalthaftigkeit*] and entered the realm of anonymity into which it exteriorizes itself when it stands in truth and when the knowledge radiating from its human source dissolves the contours of the visible natural form.¹³⁹

Hilberseimer projects his analyses of present culture toward a utopian future. But here we must recall that, to the extent that the mass ornament, including Hilberseimer's architectural version of it, presents itself as a fetishization of existing psycho-physical culture, and to the extent that the consumption of the ornamental figures distracts from concrete, material action toward *changing* the current social system, it becomes comprehensible how fascism, a short time later, would be able to reinvest those mass ornaments that lay devoid of substance with an altogether unintended and horrifyingly different meaning; so that the masses would ultimately come to claim to see their own triumph of the will in the megalomania of the ciphers and spectacles of Naziism. And here we can recollect my earlier claim that the

¹³⁹Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," 73

disintegrating ambiguity of Hilberseimer's work stands in uneasy parallel to the disintegration of Weimar Germany and its passage into fascism.¹⁴⁰

Hilberseimer's utopian neutralization of capitalism ends up making a contribution, above and beyond its value as an instrument of urban analysis, to the production of a version of the mass ornament, and projects a form, more properly ideologically determined than most architectural critics have allowed, according to which it is proposed that society be organized. Understood in this way, the *Hochhausstadt* comes to constitute something like an impossible third term which attempts to resolve the objective demands of the social with subjective existence: the project registers the subjective oscillation between massification, critical individual agency, dispersion into a postindividual collective framework, and the reactionary capitulation of individuality to the suprahistorical forces of technology, blood, and nation.¹⁴¹ In this sense, the *Hochhausstadt* itself can still be described as a mediation

¹⁴⁰The idea of a dialectic of progress, of advances in society taking place through repression of individuals, is a central theme in modern social theory evident in writers from Hegel to Weber, Freud, and Marx. But Weimer's right-wing intellectuals contributed to an irrationalist and nihilist embrace of technology and the eclipse of the bourgeois individual through a reactionary reading of Nietzsche, elevating the idea of the *Fronterlebnis* over effeminate normative standards, linking the concept of eroticized technological beauty to an elitist notion of the will, and finally interpreting war technology and the metropolis as the embodiment of that beauty and that will. Perhaps Ernst Jünger is the most vivid example of the fetishization of technological that begins sounding very close to the language of Hilberseimer, but culminates in Naziism. For example, Jünger wrote, "The country and the nation... must come to terms with the following necessity: We must penetrate and enter into the power of the metropolis, into the forces of our time — the machine, the masses, and the worker. For it is in these that the potential energy so crucial for tomorrow's national spectacle resides.... [I]t is precisely these masses who will produce a decisive and unrestricted leader, one who will have far fewer restrictions on his actions than even the sovereign of the absolute monarchy did." Ernst Jünger, "Groszstadt und Land," *Deutsches Volkstum* 8 (1926): 579-80. What separates Hilberseimer from such thought, I believe, is precisely the de-aestheticization and de-eroticization of mass technology.

¹⁴¹The latter was described by Ernst Jünger as an "anonymous slavery," saying, "it is certainly our innermost will to sacrifice our freedom, to give up our existence as individuals and to melt into a large life circle, in which the individual has as little self-sufficiency as a cell which must die when separated from the body." Ernst Jünger, "Fortschritt, Freiheit und Notwendigkeit," *Arminius* 8 (1926): 8.

on the order of Simmel's concept of style or Meyer's Co-op form, as an architectural production standing between subject and object.

And yet, another structure, which can now be specified, overlaps that of *Groszstadtarchitektur* as an effect of metropolitan actuality, as production of *Spuren*, and as mass ornament. Hilberseimer's conflictual model of subjectivity — the recognized loss of an authentic relation with the external world coupled with the hope to recapture a relation by building a world up again — shares the structure of paranoia, in which conflictual anxieties become projected forms. Of course, the passage from (or even coincidence of) the radical desire for resistance and change to (or with) the increasingly cynical self-resignation is not unfamiliar, especially, perhaps, on the political left.¹⁴² And given our analysis in this section, Hilberseimer's affirmational internalization of the schizophrenic dissolutions of capitalism — his Nietzschean choice — may correctly, I think, be interpreted as a point of contact with the *fear* of that suprapersonal system of modernity.

For Hilberseimer, the artistic subject must still be the principal agency of mediation between the realm of production and the realm of form. Though he recognizes that the individual subject in modernism is ineluctably dispersed, his Nietzschean conception of the heroic artist still requires a unifying principle of the subject. Hilberseimer's solution, however, is not to reassert individual unity, but to totalize the disunifying components of the real: Riegl's supraindividual *Kunstwollen* replaces the individual subject in a construction that can totalize capitalism as the

¹⁴²See, for example, Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy. (On Erich Kästner's New Book of Poems)," *Screen* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1974 [orig. 1931]): 28-32.

socioeconomic force of modern society, Fordism or Taylorism as its mode of production, cellular repetition and seriality as its architectural form, and dispersal as the subjective condition of everyday life. The fundamental category under which Hilberseimer's thought operates is that of the whole: we oscillate back and forth between cellular and structural, molecular and molar, local and global, euphoria and distraction, until a totality of "will" is reached. As the *Kunstwollen* becomes a kind of field phenomenon, it appears to operate as a virtual subject, accountable to no one while seeming to account for everything, and thus resolving the tension between the objective reality and some future utopia arising from it. But the form of that utopia is, as we have seen, already presignified as a possibility, as a possible category, by the objective reality of the present. Hilberseimer's totality is an *affirmational tautology* — an ecstatic surrender of the subject to the very force that assures its dissolution.

I would like to suggest that this particular inscription of the subject I have been trying to articulate — a postindividual subject at once subjected to material forces and systems of signification beyond its control, and at the same time, capable of mediating or totalizing those external forces and systems with the internal economy of architectural form — this doubled subject is not constructed for nothing. It is an "enunciative" attempt to compensate for the loss of figurability that I have already mentioned — the loss of signification, the loss of the paternal fiction of humanist thought — to the inauthenticity of mass culture. It is an attempt to insert into an imposed order an alternative space of action, itself an "effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent

unity of conflictural programs."¹⁴³ It is an attempt to salvage, within the modality of architecture, some vestige of artistic agency that might replace a dysfunctional and discredited humanism.

The duplicity of humanism lies in its implacable claim to individual rights on a reality that does not permit alternative constructions — indeed, a reality that does not even know itself as a construction — *as well as* the insistence on the subject's innocence of reality's formation: the confident, controlling apparatus of self-affirmation. In contrast, what seems to be to be at the root of Hilberseimer's urge to totalize is, as I have said, a kind of paranoia: a paranoia that is all too cognizant of distraction as the fundamental condition of everyday life, all too aware of a world out of control, and consequent of this awareness, tries to fend off the threatening and destructive identification between the discursive formations of architecture and social reality in favor of some more affirmational construction of the same. This paranoia takes its directive from Hilberseimer's ideological and epistemological imperative to maintain that a correspondence continues to exist between architectural discourse and the social world, and that there is a supraindividual artistic-heroic subject, reenfranchized and aggrandized, that resides in and mediates that correspondence.

And so the maintenance of that correspondence between subject and object must obtain through the production and affirmation of some *object* as well as a subject. This much we have already seen. But how can Hilberseimer's simultaneous production of object and subject be called paranoid? According to Freudian psychoanalysis, there are

¹⁴³Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117

two primary factors involved in paranoia. First is the withdrawal of the cathetic relationship of the subject with the outside world, a divestment of the subject's mental and emotional energy in the object. Withdrawal of cathexis is the precondition of the perceptual registration (via hallucination) of the image of the desired object. "With a reversal to unpleasure [the libido] clings to the perceptions into which the object has been transformed.... The libidinal cathexis heightens the images that have become perceptions, transforming them into hallucinations."¹⁴⁴ Second, the withdrawn libido returns to and aggrandizes the ego, becoming auto-erotic and narcissistic; this is a regression to an earlier functional mode of the ego. At this point the world is perceived as hostile to the subject and the subject becomes aggressive toward the previously desired object. Paranoia, then, emerges as the delusional reconstruction of a world, the attempt to recapture a relation with the world. The paranoid analysis constructs, from the start as it were, "in a distorted form precisely those things which neurotics keep hidden."¹⁴⁵ The paranoid projects onto external objects anything perceived as threatening and destructive within the ego. The perception of external reality is entirely produced by an internal psychic economy but is imagined as outside the body. Paranoia itself, then, is already an interpretation. Unlike in neurosis, in paranoia there is no internal tension between subject and object to be overcome through a process of analysis, all disturbances in the subject/object relationship having been expelled into a set of images, signs, and identifications which already guarantee a resolution in totality. The paranoid's delusional conceptions of reality "make demands on the thought-

¹⁴⁴Sigmund Freud to Carl Gustav Jung, in *Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 40

¹⁴⁵Sigmund Freud, "Psychoanalytical Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," 1958 [1911], in Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth Press), 9

activity of the ego until they can be accepted *without contradiction*.... [These are] interpretive delusions."¹⁴⁶ Such interpretive strategies constitute the real lifeworld of the paranoiac.

The return to libidinal attachment to the ego in paranoia parallels the return of artistic energies to an aggrandized *Kunstwollen* in Hilberseimer's theory. And the production of external signs by a wholly internal psychic economy in paranoia parallels the projection of architectural *Spuren* by a purely formal mechanism (what I earlier called Hilberseimer's system of simulacra). What is important about these paranoid symptoms here is that they are the consequence of the effort to maintain the fiction, exactly, of a wholeness in the self-engendering economy of the subject-object producing mechanism in the face of a perceived loss of boundaries and significations. This projective, interpretive mechanism is thus both a production of and a defense against reality, an objectifying apparatus that produces coherence but entails closure. And its structure can be found in the architecture of Hilberseimer, in his search for a total system operative in the gap above the subject and its experience of everyday reality. Through the hypostatization of *Wahrheitsfanatismus*, paranoia and distraction replace humanism and mimesis in the ambiguous space of Weimar culture.

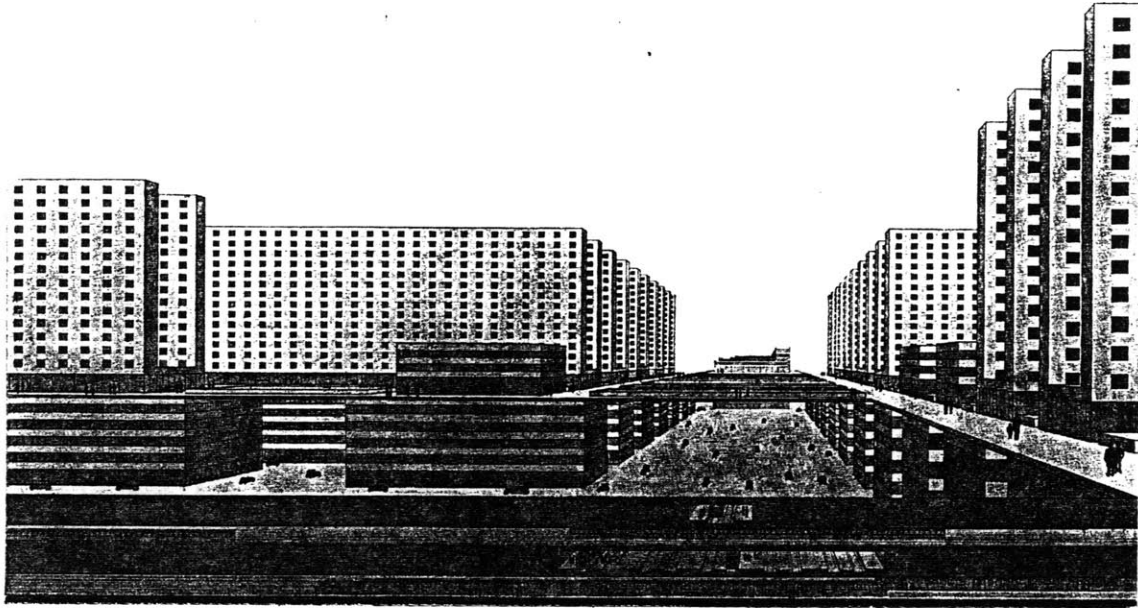
Perhaps what I have been describing is the transition from a failed idea or possibility of sustaining a critical enterprise to an order of an altogether different kind—a totalizing set of relationships among an institution of artistic production, an emergent economic and political authority, and their constituencies and audiences. Perhaps it is

¹⁴⁶Sigmund Freud, "Further Remarks on the Neuropsychology of Defence," 1962 [1896], in Freud, Standard Edition, vol. 3, 185; my emphasis

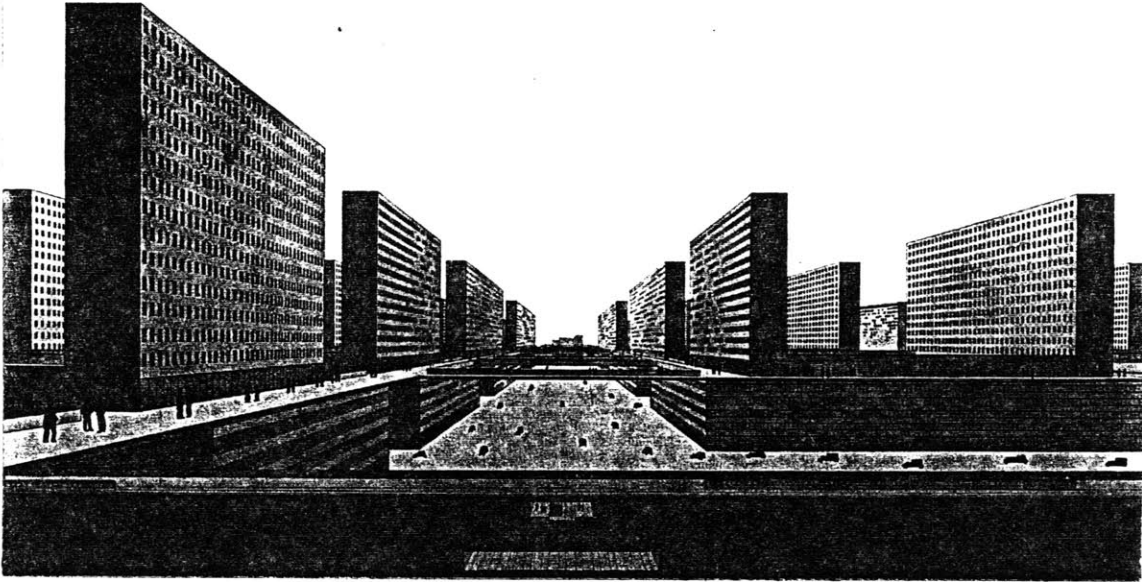
simply an example of how an architecture, produced by the accidents of a certain history, can be dislodged and pressed into the service of a quite different one, reinvested with new and unexpected content, and adapted to unsuspected ideological functions. Perhaps. But more important, what I have been describing illustrates, I believe, the way authority is revalidated, however unwittingly, by intellectuals operating by rational consent to articulate, maintain, or elaborate some prior idea or world view. Authority is maintained by the *consensus* of cultural agents — by affirmation of what exists — as well as by repression: in the final evaluation of Hilberseimer's work, this is what must be constantly confronted.



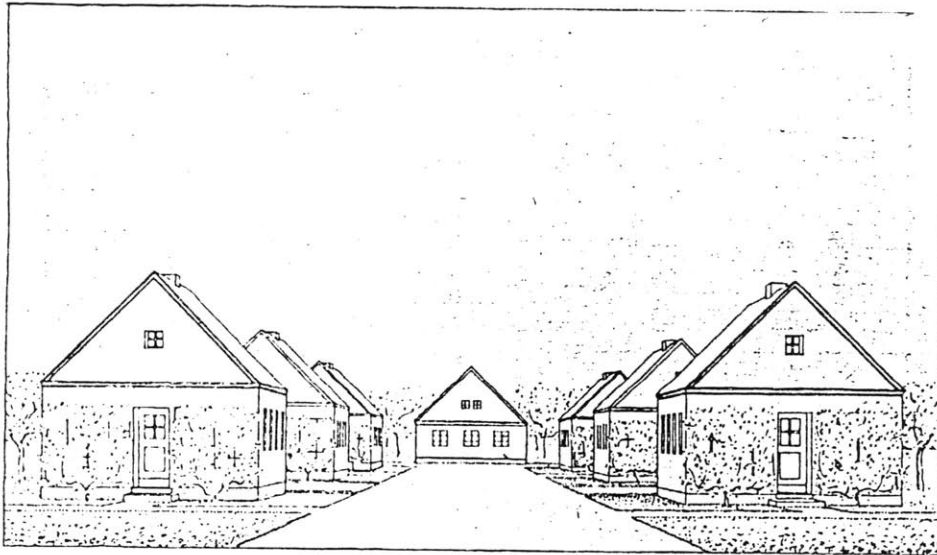
417. Cover of Groszstadtarchitektur (1927)



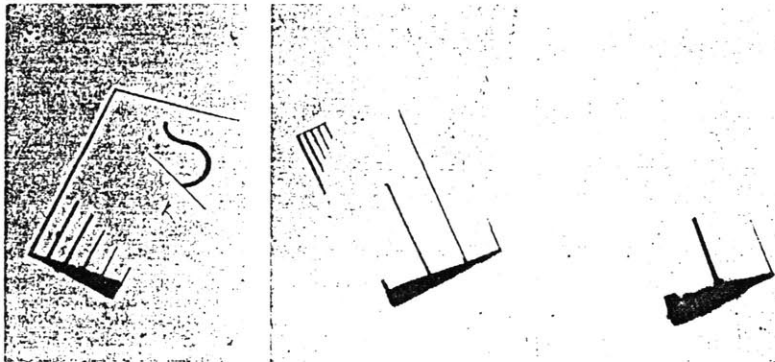
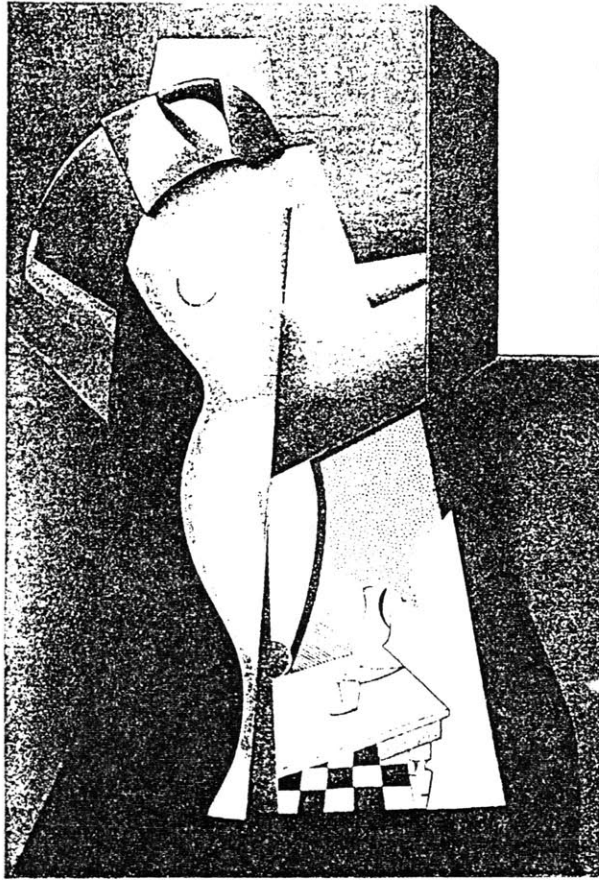
418. Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hochhausstadt,
1924, east-west street



419. Hilberseimer, Hochhausstadt, north-south street

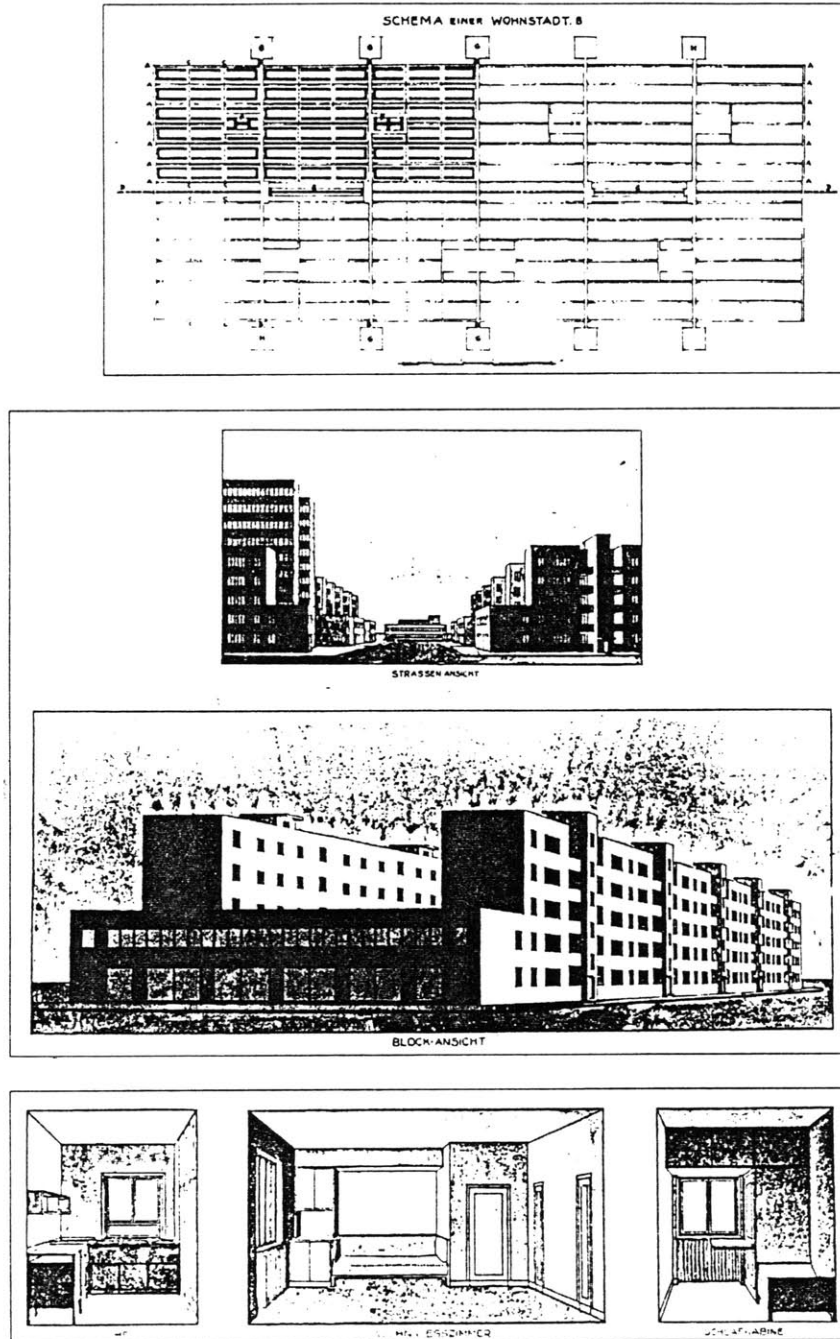


420. Heinrich Tessenow, Kleinstadt
421. Hilberseimer, Kleinstadt, c. 1905

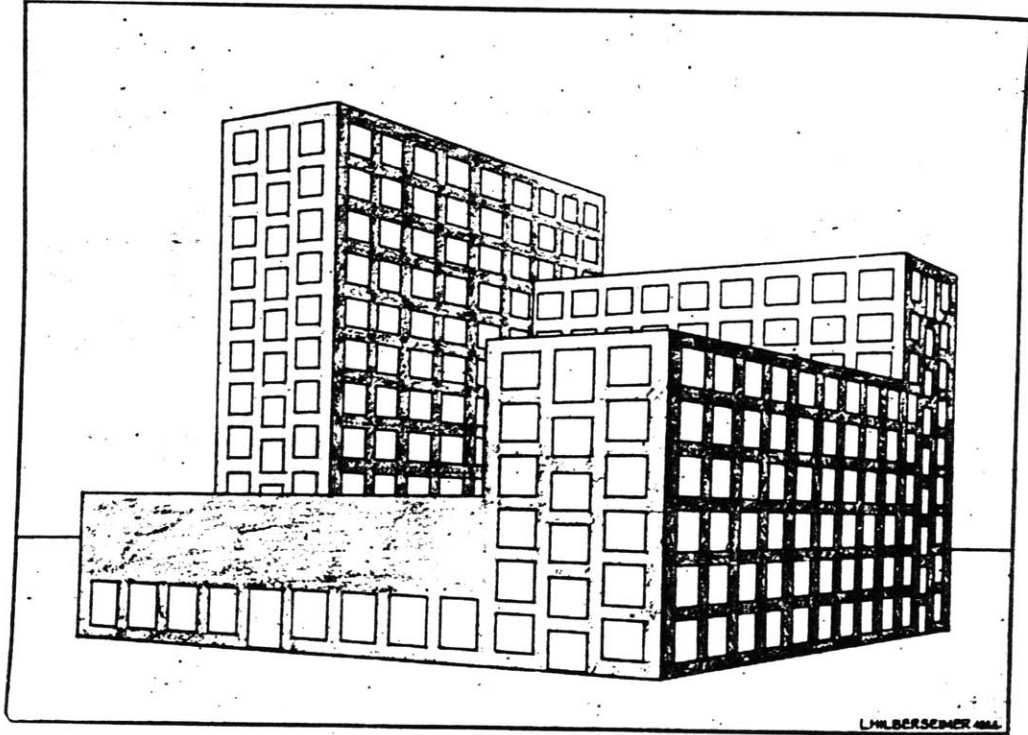


422. Alexander Archipenko, *Painting-Sculpture*, 1917

423. Viking Eggeling, *Studies for Diagonal Symphony I*, c. 1915-17, three stages



424. Hilberseimer, Wohnstadt, 1923: (a) plan, (b) perspective of street, (c) residential blocks, (d) perspectives of cell interiors



425. Hilberseimer, industrial building,
1922

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